

W Lloyd George

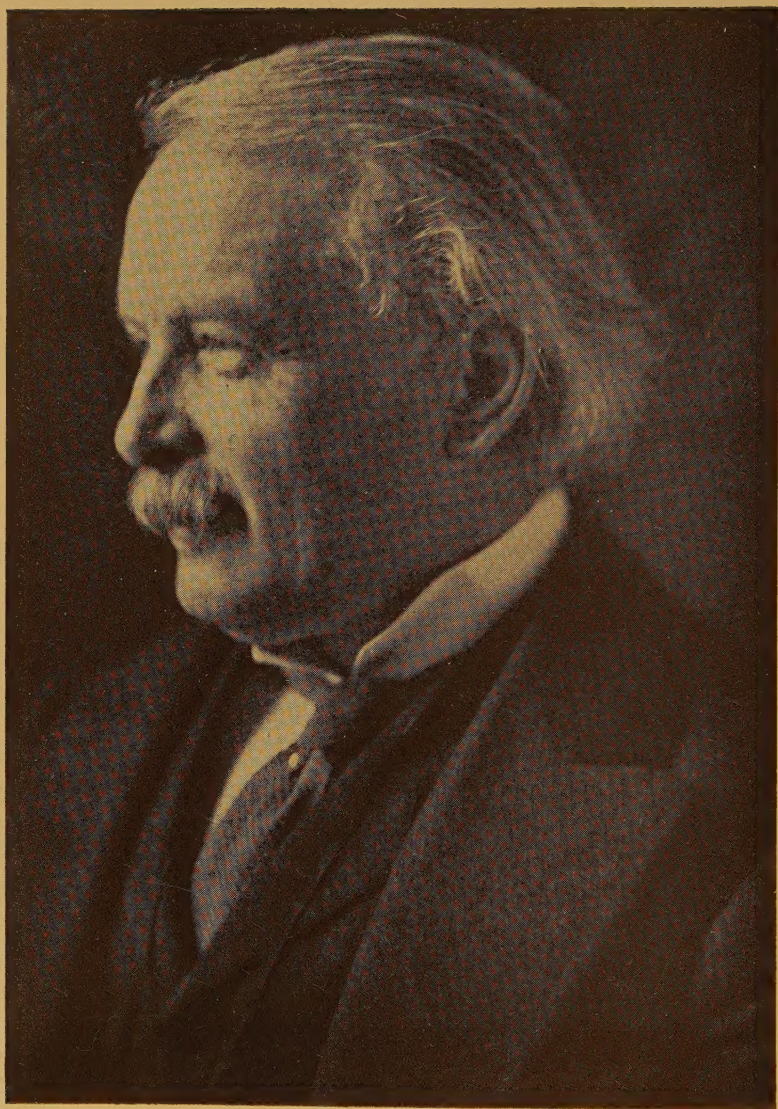
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DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

VOLUME I



David Lloyd George

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

The Man and the Statesman

By

J. HUGH EDWARDS, M. P.

With an Introduction by

JAMES JOHN DAVIS

Secretary of Labor in the Cabinets of Presidents Harding,
Coolidge and Hoover



VOLUME I

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INTRODUCTION

BY JAMES JOHN DAVIS

SECRETARY OF LABOR IN THE CABINETS OF PRESIDENTS
HARDING, COOLIDGE AND HOOVER

As I read this Life of Lloyd George, I am struck by its similarity to that of Abraham Lincoln, whom he admires so much and quotes so often. Both men were born and brought up in the pinch of poverty. Neither had much schooling. Both had mothers who continually held up to them the ambition to be of service in life. Both worked from earliest youth to prepare for the law. Both entered the political arena at an early age. Both had that indescribable quality called personal magnetism, and the rare faculty of converting abstract ideas into living realities that instantly appealed to the universal understanding. Both had a life-giving and life-saving sense of humor. Both abhorred war, yet each piloted his country through the greatest war of his time. Finally each rose to the highest office in the power of his fellow men to bestow. And both were bitterly criticised as being unprincipled and shiftily throughout

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their lives. One of these men died at the zenith of his power. The other is still alive, still attacked, still hated, still revered.

Perhaps there is a reason for this striking similarity. Even as a child, David Lloyd George had instilled into him, by his mother and his uncle, a veneration for Abraham Lincoln as the greatest man of modern times. All through his life, Lloyd George has read everything that Lincoln said or wrote, and again and again he has avowed that his life and ambitions have been modeled on those of our martyr President.

When Lloyd George came to this country in 1923, one of the things he insisted upon immediately after his arrival was a visit to the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln. When he was entertained by the Welsh societies of Pittsburgh, he told his hosts that the thing he prized most in his visit to America was the gift he had received of Lincoln's speeches and writings, and the Lincoln biographies.

Perhaps the resemblance of the two men is most marked of all in their attitude toward humanity. All his life long Lloyd George has been attacked for changing his policies, for leaping from one position to another without consistency, for deserting his friends and making friends with his enemies. Yet, as Mr. Edwards has traced this man's career in these volumes, these changes of front are invariably found to be but surface appearances. Under every one of them is the fixed purpose of using every

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means at hand to better the condition of the oppressed, the unfortunate, and the poor.

But in one sense the lot of Mr. Lloyd George was the harder. In a country like ours, where opportunity beckons on every hand, character and brains have a more open chance. In England and Wales, Mr. Lloyd George had class prejudice to combat.

I remember when I was a boy in Wales my uncle met with an accident and lost his life, leaving a widow and two children. He was buried from the home of my parents, at a time when we occupied a company house at \$5.00 a month rent. Boy that I was, I remember the question that was uppermost after supper that evening. It was how that mother was to take care of her two children, and what was to become of them. My mother had six children in her family, yet she volunteered to care for the orphan girl. It was decided, however, that to separate the boy and girl would never do, so my mother agreed to take them both. This incident came back to me when I heard President Hoover state that he remembered the decision made by his relatives to provide for him after the death of his parents. Both Herbert Hoover and Lloyd George were left orphans at an early age. As Mr. Lloyd George was provided for during childhood by his relatives, so was President Hoover. And in this story of David Lloyd George we meet with the same touching situation.

To all Americans the life story of David Lloyd

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George contains something inspiring. It is the story of a boy born in material poverty, with no advantages, who yet educated himself and fought his way to the top through every sort of vicissitude. More than that, it is the inspirational example of a man who through every test maintained his ambition to be of service to his fellows, to better the condition of the oppressed, to devote his life to the cause of the unfortunate—that major mass of humanity which has always to struggle against terrific odds.

By now the outline of Lloyd George's life is fairly familiar. We know that he was reared in a little Welsh village, a member of a family so pinched in its living that he was taken over as a child by an uncle who kept a cobbler's shop in the front room of the family cottage. In later life Mr. George once said, "Never shall I forget the harrowing narratives I heard as a mere boy—told thousands of times—of excessive rent and grinding conditions. They are among the traditions of my boyhood." No American heart can fail to respond to that appeal. We as a people, immigrants from the days of Plymouth and Jamestown on, have inherited the same fighting spirit, and sympathize with that spirit wherever it shows itself.

At the age of four, young David Lloyd George was taught by a neighbor. At fourteen his teacher had nothing more to tell him. For a year or two the boy struggled with his shoemaker uncle to learn enough

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Latin and French to pass the preliminary examinations for the law. At fifteen he scraped up enough money from his mother and his uncle to pay the required fees. In another year or two he had been admitted to the bar, and began his practice.

Instinctively he at once took up the cause of his neighbors and defended them against the oppressions of class privilege which he himself had felt so bitterly. He even defended poachers, on the ground that more thought and money were being lavished on the care of game than on the landlord's tenants and their houses. Those who have heard David Lloyd George reviled as an unprincipled time-server, with nothing but a consuming ambition to get ahead by any means, at any cost, will wonder why, if this is true, he should have opposed, at the very beginning of his career, the established privileges of class, especially when it brought down on his head the ire of judges who objected to his irritating defense of those who were seldom defended, and who persisted in and out of court in raising questions which these poor oppressed people had all their lives considered best left unasked. Such a career is not followed by the man who means to get ahead at any cost.

His life-long task has been that of tearing away the privileges of class. Later the man's strong Non-conformist sentiment led him to fight Parliament itself for the right of Baptists and all other creeds to have their own schools and churches, and this at a time

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when no schools might exist that were not under the control of the Anglican Church. To us this may look like fighting windmills, but in England no government appropriations at that time could be made to any but Church schools. Hence it was a notable victory that he won.

For years Lloyd George fought to gain some sort of local government for Wales that would reduce taxes and give the common people—the so-called “cottage man”—an equal share in the government of his own community. There is another point in the Lloyd George character and career that will appeal to the American spirit of democracy and fair play.

It was a battle, too, that called for courage. All these measures of his were aimed at the hoary, time-honored attitude of the upper classes toward the poor. In consequence of his attacks the name of Lloyd George became a by-word for treachery and evil. He was charged with using this class prejudice to advance himself. The little Welshman nevertheless went on proposing budgets of the new order, until he finally involved himself in a war with the House of Lords. It mattered nothing to him. In the end, nothing daunted, he boldly attacked the Upper Chamber itself, and ultimately destroyed the right of that body to veto the acts of the House of Commons.

When the Boer War broke out, Lloyd George, well knowing what the pacifists' lot is like, bitterly assailed

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the position of his Government. "Why do I object to war?" he asked. "Because I know of nothing that arrests progress like war." Yet when the Germans threw their armies into oppressed little Belgium, the characteristic instinct of the man rushed him to their defence. The rest we know. He never stopped. First he was charged with raising men and munitions. Next he was Minister for War. Finally he was made Prime Minister to conduct British policy until the moment of victory. Few have held such power over millions of men, or used it to better purpose.

Wherever Lloyd George has been, whatever office he has filled, he has never been out of touch with the people, with Democracy. As Mr. Edwards has traced this meteoric career, biography is made to read like romance. It is drama, rather, the narrative of this ward of a Welsh cobbler, who learned to read by studying the Bible, and rose to fill the most exalted office that his country had to give him.

At the close of the account we have Lloyd George in the setting of Paris and the signing of the Versailles Treaty, with Woodrow Wilson and Clemenceau. Here is an illuminating addition to history, in this close-up portrait of the three men, with their varied personalities, their differing points of view, and their struggles together to solve problems that proved impossible to solve.

Americans of Welsh descent will find in the pages

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of his Life everything to interest them in the man who accomplished so much for their mother country. American readers in general will get a picture of a man after their own hearts. Few know that some of Lincoln's, Coolidge's and Hoover's ancestors came from Wales, but every one knows that all three of these Presidents of our country came from the common people and worked their way to the peaks by service for their fellow men.

The Honorable Hugh Edwards is eminently fitted to be the biographer of David Lloyd George. I have known Mr. Edwards for many years, as a delightful personality and a gifted orator. His many years of experience in Parliament have given him invaluable knowledge of the background of the man whose life he here portrays, and he has handled his material like a master biographer.

I, too, have known David Lloyd George for many years. During the World War, I called on him in London at No. 10, Downing Street, the official residence of the Prime Minister of Great Britain. Even greater was my good fortune to hear his historic speech in the Parliament pleading for a unified command, out of which came ultimate victory for the Allies. I saw him again in Paris, and later in London, where I invited him to come for and on behalf of the American Welsh and their descendants to visit the United States. I shall always remember the fine reception accorded him by the American people.

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As one who had the good fortune to be an eye-witness to some of this important history in the very making, it seems as if I were living again those scenes as I read Mr. Edwards' pages. Their vivid accuracy lends the proof of verity to the entire work, which glows from end to end with the fire of a biographer who has a justifiable love for his subject, and has the power to communicate that respect to all his readers.

JAMES JOHN DAVIS.

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

VOLUME ONE

I

ANCESTRY AND BOYHOOD DAYS

CHAPTER I

ANCESTRY AND BOYHOOD DAYS

STANDING out like a bastion, rugged of mien, with its rock-bound shores, and formidable of aspect, with its frowning fastnesses, as it keeps sentry at the entrance to two Channels, in defiance of the tempests that sweep across the Atlantic, the south-western peninsula of Wales—known as the kingdom of Dyfed, in those remote times when Britain was severed into tribal divisions, but as the county of Pembroke in modern nomenclature—has filled as distinctive a place in the history of Wales as it has in its geography. The basic stratum of its population is of Iberian stock with a perceptible strain of the aboriginal inhabitants of the land whom the Iberian immigrants, in the processes of settlement, gradually absorbed. But, though the Iberian settlers had displayed a striking capacity for assimilating their surroundings, they subsequently demonstrated their own imperviousness to the subtle influences of a higher civilisation, for, in no part of Britain, are the vestiges of the Roman Conquest so meagre and so uncertain as they are in this south-west corner of Wales. Unlike the other parts of the land it displays no trace of the skill of the Romans in road-making. The explanation is obvious. In no part of the island was the triumphant

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march of the Roman legions so seriously impeded by the disadvantages of regional inaccessibility or so sullenly resisted, when such difficulties had been ultimately surmounted, by the inhabitants of the invaded territory, as was the case in the south-western peninsula.

The Roman invasion proved to be but the precursor of successive irruptions—Saxon and Scandinavian, Norman and Fleming—for the south-west portion has undergone greater racial dislocations than any other part of Wales, and each dislocation has left an indelible impress on the ethnic setting of the peninsula. It was the stronghold of the Norman régime in Wales, with its circle of strongly-built castles as the devised instruments for the ruthless subjugation of Welsh independence. In the twelfth century, large numbers of Flemings were established by King Henry in this corner of Wales and given possession of its soil. "They formed no military aristocracy, content to be maintained and served by the native population, so long as power and wealth were exclusively theirs, but were an industrious community of farmers, traders and woollen manufacturers, whose settlement involved as thorough a displacement of the ancient inhabitants as did the English conquest of South-eastern Britain. It was thus that Southern Dyfed lost its Welsh character; the Welsh language ceased to be spoken there, and English having gradually taken the place of Flemish, it became 'Little England beyond Wales.'"¹

Displanted from the southern region of the peninsula, where their language had become supplanted by

¹ "History of Wales," by J. E. Lloyd.

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a foreign tongue, and their traditions discarded, the native Welsh concentrated in the northern portion—in a quickened attachment to their native tongue and to their racial characteristics. Still, notwithstanding this bifurcation of the ancient kingdom of Dyfed, which in Tudor times became constituted into the county of Pembroke, the northern portion, with its native Cymric setting, and the southern region, with its alien ancestry, found a connecting link in a common passion for the soil. Yeomen and peasants alike, in the cycle of their generations, found their joy, no less than their sustenance, exclusively in the cultivation of the land and in the care of crops and herds; and son followed father, in a cherished succession, in the possession of the farm or in the tillage of the soil, with never a thought of the world that lay beyond the seclusion of their environment.

Among the communities which were thus rooted in the Pembroke soil, in an unbroken attachment to traditions that ran back for many generations, was the George family, which flourished in the northern portion of the county at the latter end of the eighteenth century, when William George occupied the farm known as Tresinwen, 14 acres of which stretched down to the seashore and included the spot at which three French ships landed, on February 22nd, 1797, a company of 1,400 Frenchmen, composed partly of regular troops and partly of convicts, on a filibustering expedition.

Having hastily formed a camp, the invaders scattered in bands, in various directions throughout the neighbourhood for the purpose of raiding the cottages

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and farmhouses in shameless plunder. However, their ruthless looting proved of short duration, for early on the morning of the day after their landing, while the forces of the local Yeomanry of the Militia of the adjoining county, which had already been summoned to the scene, were preparing for action, the filibusters made an absolute surrender, with the result that they were marched off to Haverfordwest, where they were packed into the local jail, and where they remained in custody until the year 1802, when they were given their release under cover of the Treaty of Amiens.

William George and his wife were held in high repute throughout the district by reason of their piety and philanthropy. Ardent in their attachment to the Baptist Chapel, which was situated some distance from their home, they rode regularly on horse-back to the monthly Communion service. Each of them attained longevity—the husband living four score years, while his wife lived to celebrate her ninetieth year. Two sons were born to them, and the elder of these—David by name—married the daughter of a prosperous farmer in the southern portion of the county. The young couple set up their new home in a farm called Trecoed, which was four miles distant from Fishguard. At the death of her husband, some years later, Mrs. David George was left with a family of four girls and two boys. With characteristic grit, she bravely addressed herself to the increased burden of her responsibilities, in full determination that the grievous loss of their father's care should not handicap the children in the battle of life. A woman of boundless energy, she supplemented her domestic

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duties with constant and zealous service to the Baptist Chapel, of which she was one of the most active members. She invariably dispensed hospitality to the various itinerant preachers who, Sunday after Sunday, occupied its pulpit, and it is worthy of note that it was directly as the result of her ardent advocacy, reinforced by her personal undertaking to bear the necessary financial responsibility, that the existing sanctuary at Sceddy, near Fishguard, was erected.

Of the two boys in the family circle at this little farm of Trecoed, the elder—William by name, who was born in 1820—had been marked out by his fond mother for the medical profession. In the fulfilment of this cherished ambition, he was apprenticed, after the custom of those days, to one of the medical practitioners in the town of Haverfordwest; but it soon became evident to both the apprentice and his employer that the wrong choice had been made. The youth was subjected to such long drudgery that he could find no time for indulging his inbred passion for self-culture other than by reading far into the night, with the result that the doctor complained of the lad's wastefulness in burning "too much candle." With her characteristic practicability, Mrs. George realised the futility of her cherished hope; and, in face of her son's passionate eagerness for the scholastic profession, she finally consented to his departure to London as a tutor in a private school, where he was able, while imparting instruction to others, to replenish his own store of learning by taking full advantage of the educational facilities which the metropolis provided. From London he left for Liverpool

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to take charge of a school which was managed by a committee of Unitarians, chief of whom was the distinguished divine Dr. James Martineau, who exercised upon the impressionable young schoolmaster a deep and an abiding influence. In the fervour of his hero-worship, William George secured an autographed portrait of the eminent divine. Set in a massive oak frame, it is still treasured as one of the most cherished of the family heirlooms. From Liverpool he returned, in the year 1852, to his native county of Pembroke, and he opened a Grammar School on his own account in the town of Haverfordwest. Unfortunately the enterprise proved unsuccessful, with the result that, after five years' effort, he relinquished the task and accepted a less precarious position in the head-mastership of the Troed-yr-Allt British school at Pwllheli, in the county of Carnarvon. Here he immediately effected a perceptible improvement in the discipline and efficiency of the school. Some seventy years later, a little band of aged men, who constituted the survivors of Mr. William George's pupils, assembled at Pwllheli in honour of the illustrious son of their old schoolmaster, and they perceptibly gladdened his heart as they recalled, with a manifest sense of an undiminished gratitude, their indebtedness to his father for the thoroughness of the early training accorded them.

An excellent schoolmaster as William George thus proved himself to be, he did not suffer his duties at the school, during his stay at Pwllheli, to absorb all his energies. His activities overflowed in other directions. He stimulated the native passion for music by

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introducing, for the first time in that district, the tonic sol-fa system, while on Sunday afternoon he taught a men's class in one of the Sunday Schools. He is still remembered in the district as "a man of strong convictions who was invincible in argument and debate."

Although William George remained at Pwllheli only for the brief period of two years, there occurred there the greatest event in his career—his marriage to a fair-complexioned Welsh maiden, of the name of Elizabeth Lloyd, the daughter of David Lloyd of Llanystumdwy. In a letter to his mother in intimation of his engagement, he referred to himself as having been "lucky enough to win one of earth's best and fairest daughters." Eight years younger than her husband, the young bride came of an old Welsh family that had long been associated with the surrounding district of Llein. Her father was a descendant of the Lloyds of Llwynderus, in whose lineage figured the astronomer Richard Lloyd and Sir Gruffydd Lloyd the warrior. To this pride of ancestry her father, who was a farmer by calling, added an ingrained passion for debate which led him in early manhood to establish in his native village of Llanystumdwy, in the year 1823, an eclectic society, known as Cymdeithas Cymreigyddion, for the purpose of stimulating the natural aptitude of his associates for debate and even more, for quickening their interest in matters of ethical import. He died in the year 1839 at the early age of thirty-nine, when his daughter Elizabeth was only four years old.

No less remarkable was his wife—Rebecca by name—with her habitual gravity of facial expression,

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in manifest token of her innate strength of individuality. Of her writes one¹ who knew her from the days of his childhood: "I have always felt that far too little has been written of the grandmother, Rebecca Lloyd, one of the greatest of Mr. Lloyd George's forbears. I admit that I have only a child's recollection of her, but that recollection is vivid and deep. She used to come every Sunday morning to the little chapel at Criccieth along with her son, Mr. Richard Lloyd, and her grandchildren. As Mr. Lloyd George's mother was delicate in health she did not attend so regularly. I cannot recall a single Sunday on which Rebecca Lloyd's pew was unoccupied by herself and her little grandchildren. She had a daughter residing at a farm about a mile distant on the Portmadoc side of Criccieth. Thither she and the children repaired on the Sunday for their meals, while Mr. Richard Lloyd would go with his 'co-elder,' as his ministerial colleague was known, to Shop-yr-Eifion for his meals. Every other Sunday the grandmother was accustomed to come to my parents' home for tea. She was a determined, strong-minded woman, grave of demeanour after the manner of the old puritanic order. She was steeped in the knowledge and in the use of the Scriptures. She was an uncompromising Baptist in every way, and held to her opinions with unyielding tenacity. I am quite sure that she exercised a deep and potent influence in the moulding of the character and in the determination of the beliefs of her grandchildren."

¹ The late Dr. R. D. Evans of Festiniog, whose son is wedded to Mr. Lloyd George's elder daughter.

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In the year 1859 the young couple left their native Wales for Newchurch, in Lancashire, where William George had secured a post as headmaster of an elementary school. While there their first child—Mary Ellen—was born. Unfortunately the young schoolmaster was anything but happy in his new sphere of labours. “The place itself we could very well do with,” he subsequently wrote to a relative in explanation of his departure from the district, “for though cold and rather damp, it is healthy—the air is much purer there than at Manchester, and neither of us could hold out long without pure air. It was the Newchurch *School* and the people connected with it that did not suit me, and I need not say I did not suit them. Nearly all the ‘Directors’ are rough working men who had not the means to act liberally even if disposed to do so—and besides my temperament is such that I would rather be the master of workpeople than their servant.”

Through the instrumentality of a Dr. Morell, an Inspector of Schools who had been favourably impressed with his work as a schoolmaster, Mr. William George secured a temporary appointment as the headmaster of an elementary school at Manchester, and it was during that temporary tenure of a post that, the family circle at 5, New York Place, Chorlton-on-Medlock, was increased on the seventeenth day of January, 1863, by the advent of a baby boy. On that selfsame day William George wrote to a relative in Pembrokehire, in proud intimation of the new arrival to his hearth: “He is a sturdy healthy little fellow, stronger and much more lively than his sister,

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and he has fine curly hair.”* To the babe was given the name of David Lloyd George—the Christian names being given in tribute to the cherished memory of his maternal grandfather.

The maternity nurse who attended Mrs. George on that occasion was an Irishwoman who seems to have been intensely imbued with the traditional faith of her race in signs and omens. Recalling the popular belief in her native land that “a child with waves in his hair is sure of a living in two countries,” she was never tired of assuring the schoolmaster’s wife, as, with true Hibernian fervour, she would lift the curly-headed babe in her arms, that he was sure to make his mark in the world. So confident a prediction made a deep impression upon the young mother, for she appears to have treasured it in her heart. In later years she frequently recalled it at every upward step in the romantic career of her gifted son.

It lies beyond the purpose of this work to determine whether the delineation of destiny can be discerned either in the curl of the hair or in the shape of the lines on the hand. The credentials of psychometry for a place among the applied sciences may rank no higher than those of palmistry or of phrenology; but it is interesting to note that forty years after the prognostication of the nurse, the late W. T. Stead sought of Mr. Lloyd George a lock of his hair “for scientific rather than sentimental reasons.” Mr. Stead dispatched it to a lady who claimed to be able to delineate from a wisp of hair the character of the person from whose head it had been cut. Mr. Stead vouchsafed at the time that the lady had no indica-

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tion whatever as to identity. In due time the desired delineation was sent to the versatile journalist.

"This is the character," it ran, "of a shrewd resourceful man, with distinct individuality, and a mind pervaded by a strong sense of what is practicable and likely to yield most satisfactory results. He is one to turn circumstances of every kind to suit his purposes, being rarely baffled by opposing conditions, or, if so, his keenness and tact are sufficient even to utilise opposition by making it in some way subservient in the end, so that others are startled by discovering that barriers have been made into stepping-stones." The untutored prediction of the Irish nurse was thus amply vindicated by the developments of subsequent years.

At the close of his engagement, William George found himself compelled by the state of his health to abandon the scholastic profession, with its long hours in an ill-ventilated building, for the manifest advantage of an out-door life. For that reason he returned to his native district where he renewed the lease of a small farm, known as Bwlford, near the town of Haverfordwest, in his native county of Pembroke. And thither, before the baby boy had attained his first year, the family migrated. It is one of the cherished traditions of the family that although William George had been compelled to relinquish the rôle of a schoolmaster for that of a small farmer, his studious habits remained unimpaired.

His passion for reading continued with unabated force, and each day's tasks alternated between manual toil and mental studies. Within the domain of the

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little farm, books shared with agricultural implements the distinction of being necessary requisites, and however hard the day's toil, no day ended without finding the schoolmaster-farmer deep in his books.

The hearth was rarely free from carking care or from the black shadows of domestic anxiety. Their little son was little more than a year old when he was laid low with an attack of croup which was so severe that for some days his life was despaired of. Happily the danger passed and the child recovered. In later years, when Lloyd George had attained to national fame, the local Doctor was both ready and proud to claim that it was his skill that had saved the child's life in the day of peril.

Baulked in its first attempt to break the little family circle, the Angel of Death returned some months later and William George was taken away after only a few days' illness. The young wife was thus left a widow, and her two wee bairns deprived of a father's tender care when they needed it most; while the burden of anxiety was made still heavier by the birth, shortly afterwards, of a posthumous son to whom was given his father's name—William George.

Happily there is, amid all the dire circumstances of life, an overseeing and benign Providence "who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." In her great sorrow the bereaved widow naturally turned to her bachelor brother, Mr. Richard Lloyd, who was still living at the old home in the little village of Llanystumdwy where he was plying his craft as a shoemaker.

Even in these times, with their many facilities in the way of rapid locomotion, the journey from Car-

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narvonshire to Pembrokeshire is long and wearisome. It comprises within its ambit half the counties of Wales, and it entails a whole day's travelling. Sixty years ago there were no such travelling facilities as now exist. On some portions of the journey there was no railway, and even in districts where railway communication had been established, the arrangements for the comfort of travellers were of the most primitive kind. No sooner, however, did Richard Lloyd hear of his sister's bereavement than he immediately set out for the homestead in Pembrokeshire, where, arriving at the end of a long and wearisome journey, after two full days' constant travelling, he forthwith shouldered the burden of her anxieties. In a ready discernment of her straitened circumstances, he decided to take her and her fatherless children back with him to his own hearth at Llanystumdwy in order that their manifest needs should henceforth become the first charge on his slender purse.

It is easy to understand how welcome so practical an act of sympathy must have been to Mrs. George. The generous offer was readily accepted with the result that, immediately after the funeral, the furniture, and the household effects of the little farm were sold by public auction on the patch of green in front of the house.

At that time David was just a little over two years old, but he still retains the most vivid memories of the event and of the feelings of resentment which took possession of his little sister and himself as they saw the various articles of furniture, so dear and familiar to them, dumped together in the open air

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and handed over to various individuals in the crowd. He remembers how the two of them stuck pebbles under the gate in the hope of being able to keep the strangers from carrying away the visible tokens of their little home. It is the earliest of his memories and its unabated vividness is reflected in the fact that when he returned to Bwlford, forty-five years later, he instantly marked the changes that had occurred in the intervening years. "The front gate," he exclaimed, "used to be a green folding gate." That was so, as the tenant readily admitted. The gate, that had so long done duty in front of the little farm *was* a green folding gate, but some months previously it had been replaced by a larger and a more serviceable gate.

The little village of Llanystumdwy, where Mr. Richard Lloyd brought his widowed sister and her children—is situated in an amphitheatre of sharply outlined mountains, with sheer and rugged precipices, which from time immemorial have been known as Creigiau Eryri—the Craggs of the Eagles, a name which tells of a time when the king of birds had his home upon its inaccessible cliffs. Its tranquillity is still unbroken by the sound of a steam whistle. It has one elementary school, which is under the aegis of the Parish Church, but its main buildings are the Nonconformist chapels, within whose walls the great bulk of its population habitually foregather for worship.

The home of Richard Lloyd was a one-storied house at the head of a row of small houses abutting on the road to Criccieth. The cottage, which was then known as "Highgate," contained four rooms. The "living" room, into which the front door opened,

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had a rafted ceiling, a large fireplace, and a floor of slate slabs. Adjoining this room was a smaller chamber, which was originally used as a store-room for leather, but which in later years was turned into a study for the shoemaker's nephews. Between these two rooms a small staircase ascended to two bedrooms. To the left of the house there was a small annex which constituted Richard Lloyd's workshop where he toiled for his daily bread. Above the front door there was a sign-board engraved with the words: "Richard Lloyd: Gwneuthwr"—the Welsh equivalent for shoemaker—while underneath this inscription were painted, after the custom of village shoemakers, a boot and a top-boot, in illustration of the craft plied within. Poor, where all were poor, Richard Lloyd knew no respite from the daily toil by which he supplied the needs of his little household. Even so, his generosity of heart, reinforced with his intimate knowledge of the circumstances of his customers, habitually led him to assure them, as he handed them the boots which had been ordered by them, that he could wait their convenience for payment—"any time will do" was the intimation that frequently fell from his lips. However, by his life-long habits of thrift and of the most rigid exercise of economy, he had succeeded in raising himself a little above the general level of his customers, with the result that his two nephews had the distinction of being the only lads in the village who wore knickerbockers—a distinction which in those days constituted in Llanystumdwy an unchallengeable token of affluence. Still, in spite of such signs of a competence, the hearth of the shoe-

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maker's cottage was never without its shadow of an incessant struggle for sustenance with the result that Richard Lloyd's widowed sister had both to strive and to contrive in order to keep the needs of the little household within the limits of its resources. "My mother," testified Mr. Lloyd George in later years as he recalled, with a wistful vividness, the memories of those earlier days, "had to make a hard struggle to rear her children. But she never complained, and she never spoke of her struggles. It was not until long after, that we were able to appreciate how fine had been her spirit in the hard task of bringing up her fatherless children. Our bread was home-made. We never ate fresh meat, and I remember that our greatest luxury was half an egg for each child on Sunday mornings."

To his daily task as a village shoemaker, Richard Lloyd added the duties and the responsibilities of the honorary pastorate of the Nonconformist chapel at Criccieth, known by the name of Penymaes. The history of this church runs back to a stormy controversy which raged within the Welsh Baptist community in the closing years of the eighteenth century. In the year 1788 a young minister, of the name of J. R. Jones, had been ordained to the ministry of the Baptist church at Ramoth in the neighbouring county of Merioneth. Seven years later he was attracted to the tenets advanced by Mr. Alexander McLean, who had founded Baptist causes in Scotland, in favour of a rigid observance of the practices that prevailed in Apostolic times. Chief among such practices was that of an unpaid ministry. The Apostle

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Paul, it was pointed out, received no payment for preaching the Gospel, but was content to maintain himself by the exercise of his vocation as a tent-maker; and, on the basis of the Apostle's example, it was urged that no preacher of the Gospel should accept financial remuneration for his services. With the traditional zeal of a convert, the young minister of Ramoth advocated these tenets on every available occasion, with the result that his ministerial brethren took strong exception to such action, on the ground that such teaching created considerable unrest throughout the denomination, with a consequent risk of rupture between the churches and their ministers. The controversy was brought to a definite head at a conference of ministers which was held at Ramoth in the year 1798. At that gathering the matter at issue was debated at length and with much heat. Out-matched in dialectical prowess by Christmas Evans, the famous divine, who with fiery force had ruthlessly assailed the new teaching, J. R. Jones suddenly sprang to his feet, and seizing the Bible that lay on the table in front of him, he declared in a stentorian voice that he was there and then seceding, at the call of conscience, from the Welsh Baptist body and that in future he would seek fellowship with the brethren in Scotland "who," he added, "have received the truth in all its fulness."

But the minister of Ramoth did not go out of the denomination alone, for the Baptist churches in his own district, where the north-west corner of Merionethshire touches the south-east portion of Carnarvonshire, instantly ratified his decision by following his example. Conspicuous among them was the little

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church at Criccieth. Faced by the spectacle of pastorless churches, the minister at Ramoth realised that it was incumbent upon him to embrace within his own pastoral oversight all those churches which had so loyally espoused his attitude. Consequently the Baptist church at Criccieth came under his personal supervision and had the advantage of his ministrations at its customary week-night service.

On the last occasion on which he conducted the service at the little chapel at Criccieth, he seems to have had a premonition of approaching death, for he was so overcome with emotion, as he exhorted the congregation, that the tears flowed down his rugged cheeks. The sight of the tears so re-acted upon the congregation that they broke out into loud weeping. Among those present at that memorable service was David Lloyd—the local shoemaker—who was deeply impressed by the scene. With the subsequent death of Jones of Ramoth, all the churches that had been within the circle of his care were left bereft of leadership. In their despair some of these orphaned churches returned to their former denominational attachments, but a few of them set themselves to cherish the memory of their leader by still greater devotion to his cause. Conspicuous among such was the little church at Criccieth, which proceeded forthwith to call to its unpaid ministry the young shoemaker David Lloyd, who had already given proof of an inbred gift of utterance. On him there thus developed the double task of toiling at the cobbler's bench six days in the week for his daily bread and shepherding every Sunday the little flock at the little chapel at Criccieth—

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a task which he discharged with an unfailing fidelity up to the time of his death in the year 1839.

Four years after the death of Jones of Ramoth the little church at Criccieth proceeded to exercise afresh its traditional readiness to break with its own past when considerations of conscience demanded; for in the year 1843 it proceeded to break away from that association with the Scotch Baptists into which it had so boldly entered nearly fifty years before. On this occasion the gleam came from the other side of the Atlantic, where an Irish divine of the name of Alexander Campbell had founded a new sect based upon the abolition of all confessions and formalities, and the acknowledgment of the literal interpretation of the Scriptures as the sole creed of the Christian Church.

The new teaching soon found an echo on British soil and among the first to give welcome to its fundamental tenets were the members of the Baptist church at Criccieth, for they were quick to discern in the Campbellite movement the fruition of those principles which Jones of Ramoth had so zealously proclaimed.

Twenty years after the death of David Lloyd, his son Richard was called to the joint ministry of the church at Criccieth, in emulation of his father's example in combining the daily drudgery of the shoemaker's bench with the loftier task of "preaching the Word." Inheriting that passionate love of reading which had characterised his father, he, too, found it congenial, even amid the drudgery of his little workshop, to find time each day to prepare for Sunday's sermons. In the wall near his bench, there had been scooped out a yawning hole in which he was accus-

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tomed to keep the particular books which he was reading at the time, and with every respite from the job on hand he would draw forth a volume and become absorbed in its pages until either the clamant call of the next job or the intrusion of a caller would bring him back from its quiet perusal—to be taken up again at the close of the day, when the door of the workshop had been closed and the whole village had become wrapt in slumber. Consequently it was no uncommon thing for the local doctor, when called out in the late hours of the night, to see the light of a candle shining through Richard Lloyd's bedroom window, in manifest demonstration that he was busily engaged in preparation for Sunday's services. With a long beard, which gave him, in later life, a patriarchal appearance, Richard Lloyd was the gentlest of men. Strictly Puritanic in his sentiments, as he undoubtedly was, he had none of that sternness of attitude which has come to be regarded as the distinctive trait of the Puritanic tradition. He combined dignity of demeanour with a serenity of spirit. He invariably spoke in the softest of tones and he never lifted up his voice in heated argument. But beneath the even tenour of his temperament there smouldered a fervid sense of moral indignation which instantly flamed forth in flashing eye and in strong remonstrance at the sight of any injustice or of any violation of the sovereign rights of conscience. Such was the man who took upon himself the charge of his widowed sister and her fatherless children when death ravaged their hearth at Bwlford and deprived them of their bread-winner. Richard Lloyd not only

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provided them with a home, where their daily needs, in the way of material sustenance, were assured them by the dint of his unremitting labours at the bench, but he made their welfare the dominating object of his constant care and solicitude. "My uncle never married," observed Lloyd George in later years, "and he set himself the task of educating the children of his sister as a sacred duty. To that duty he gave his time, his energy and all his money."

On the third of September in the year 1866, the elder of the shoemaker's nephews—David Lloyd George—was taken to the village school and his name recorded in the school register. At that time he was only three years and seven months old. The subsequent entries in the register, in association with his name, mark out the clear trail of his progress, and it is significant that, on the occasion of his transference from the Infants' Department, he was placed forthwith in the Second Standard on the ground that his proficiency was already beyond the measure of the First Standard. This occurred in July, 1871, and each succeeding July—the appointed time of the annual inspection—marked his advent to a higher standard until, in the year 1876, he reached the seventh standard—the highest in the curriculum of elementary schools.

At that time there were none of the educational advantages, in the way of intermediate schools and special bursaries which are now within the reach of the pupils of every elementary school. In the seventies the village school was an educational cul-de-sac. It led to no higher educational plane, and there was no

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course open to any pupil, anxious to secure as much educational equipment as possible, other than to remain in the school beyond the period prescribed in the regulations. Fortunately, the school at Llanystumdwy, though sadly handicapped in many ways, had in its headmaster—David Evans—one who was specially qualified to conduct the senior pupils on an advanced course. In addition to his knowledge of the classics, he was proficient in mathematics, and was thus able to give special tuition in advanced arithmetic and algebra. Accordingly, when David Lloyd George had attained his fourteenth year, David Evans readily agreed to constitute a special class, designated in the register as “Ex VII,” for his benefit and that of two other pupils, one of whom had already set his heart upon entering the Nonconformist ministry. These three pupils sat at a table in close proximity to the headmaster’s desk so as to enable him to keep in constant touch with them. Day after day he gave them tuition in Latin, but it was in mathematics that they were made to feel the strain. He would set them a number of difficult problems, and award the highest marks to the boy who first handed in the correct solutions. This brought about a spirit of keen rivalry, and David soon gained a reputation for quickness at “sums,” for, more often than not, his was the first slate handed in.

Narrow as was his sphere, David Evans’ zest for learning knew no restriction. To the end of his days he displayed the instinct and the zeal of the student. He was an excellent scholar in both Latin and Greek, and to his knowledge of the classics he added a pas-

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sion for the study of astronomy. It would appear, however, that he invariably showed to the greatest advantage in the Scripture lesson which was given regularly each morning. He revelled in the most stirring of the historical events in the Old Testament which he was accustomed to narrate with a fervour that held his pupils spell-bound.

Mr. Lloyd George still recalls the thrilling manner in which he would describe to them the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. In his outstretched hand he would hold his cane, in symbol of the sacrificial knife, which at the critical moment would be suddenly dropped to the ground with a crash that visibly awed his juvenile audience. It is easy to believe that on such occasions David Evans had no more attentive listener than David Lloyd George. They provided him with his first lessons in that art of dramatic appeal in which he was destined to become so consummate a master.

"I attended the school at Llanystumdwy," writes one of his school associates, "at the time when David Lloyd George commenced his education there. He was known among his school associates as David Lloyd, and he and I were for some time together in the same class. As the result of some special task assigned to us, three of us were forthwith promoted to a higher class, so that for the remainder of my school days I was no longer in the same class as the future Chancellor. In his early years at school David Lloyd was not so quick a learner as some of his classmates. I distinctly recall that some of these—notably Humphrey of the Mill, Bob of the Little Mill

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(afterwards a tutor at Oxford), and David Owen, Braich-y-Sant, were quicker than he was in some respects, but undoubtedly David Lloyd surpassed them in general knowledge. He was always to the fore in geography and in arithmetic, and he was especially strong in practice sums. His weakest point was his penmanship, which his companions used to characterise as 'crows'-feet'. In his early years he was not much devoted to outdoor games. On the contrary, he was quite a bookworm. After tea he would remain in the house poring over books and especially the Scriptures, under the direction of his uncle, while the rest of us would be indulging in games. Herein lies the real secret of his intimate knowledge of the Scriptures, and the ease with which he is able to weave Biblical references into the texture of his speeches. He draws upon those resources which he garnered, evening after evening, in the days of his boyhood.

"Even in those early years, there was something in his demeanor which marked him out from among his associates after the manner of Joseph and his brethren. I and most of the children usually carried only one book to and from school, but he would always have a whole bundle under his arm, and he walked as if conscious of a future destiny. He carried the books always under the same arm, and unwittingly he contracted the habit of drooping his head—a characteristic which earned for him from some of the children the sobriquet of 'Old Methodist'. I cannot remember his being punished at any time by the old schoolmaster, David Evans. I distinctly recall

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that his demeanour was always one of marked quietness."

The school at Llanystumdwy was a National school—founded for the purpose of teaching the Creed of the Anglican Church, while dispensing the rudiments of education, to the children of Churchmen and Nonconformists alike. Every Church school, it has been urged, should have two doors—the one opening from without through which every child should be free to enter, and the other opening direct into the Church itself, thus constituting the school into an ecclesiastical vestibule. The founders of the Llanystumdwy school strove hard to make it an integral part of the parish church. "There were not half a dozen Church children in the school," Lloyd George has declared in reference to his own school-days, "but all the atmosphere and the government of the school were of the Church."

Coming from a hearth that was saturated with Nonconformist sentiment, it was inevitable that, with increasing powers of discernment, the shoemaker's nephew should find himself in open conflict with the fundamental purpose of the school. The conflict came earlier than might have been expected. For many years it was the custom on Ash Wednesday for the children at the Llanystumdwy school to march in procession to the parish church. As the lad grew in years, he became more and more resentful of feeling towards the Anglican Church as the symbol of forces and influences that were manifestly hostile to the chapels which he had grown to cherish. For that reason he felt no remorse in quietly slipping away into the surrounding

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woods, along with his companions, when the scholars were being marshalled in the playground preparatory for the procession to the parish church. On one occasion David Lloyd George espied a school companion clad in his Sunday suit in manifest preparation for confirmation in the Church. His natural abhorrence of the proceeding was intensified by the fact that his companion was "a Chapel lad," and that the lad's parents had given their consent only after personal pressure on the part of the Vicar and the schoolmaster. But David was determined that the lamb should not be lured out of the Nonconformist fold. For that reason he set himself to allure the lad to play truant with him in search of sport in the woods. The device succeeded with the result that both Vicar and schoolmaster looked in vain for their young convert. That lad's confirmation never took place. He is now a Calvinistic Methodist deacon in a little country chapel in the heart of Carnarvonshire, and he is ever ready to confess that but for Lloyd George the current of his life would have flowed in a different channel.

A more stirring incident in the record of David Lloyd George's opposition to all that savoured of Anglicanism was his rebellion over the recital of the Creed. In the calendar of every church school there was an annual examination, by Diocesan inspectors, in the religious teaching imparted in the course of the preceding year, especially in the Church Catechism and the Creed. In the Llanystumdwy school it was customary for the county magnates in the district to attend on such an occasion, while on the

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day preceding the annual event the schoolmaster invariably made a special point of urging upon the children the propriety of appearing on the following day in their "Sunday best"—a request that was always observed. On one of these occasions, when Mrs. George was busy getting everything ready for her children for the morrow's event, her brother's indignation flamed forth. He expatiated upon the absurdity of questioning Nonconformist children in the Church Catechism. He reminded her that they were required to declare that their names had been given them by their godfathers and their godmothers, notwithstanding the fact that such children had never had either the one or the other. Moreover, the children were taught to say that their names had been given them at their baptism, "whereas these children," he exclaimed, as he pointed to his own little nephews, "have not yet been baptised." His indignation was shared by the mother, but what could she do in the matter? The quick ear of the elder boy, however, caught the significance of the conversation. That night David lay long awake, planning how best to thwart the evils which he had heard his uncle so graphically describe. Next morning he was up early in readiness for the plan which he had devised in the silence of the night. Gathering his school companions around him, he repeated the things which he had heard his uncle say, with the result that he was able to persuade them to promise that on no account would they recite the Creed or make the responses in the Catechism. In due time the children, assembled in the school, were commanded to repeat the Creed, but, to the astonish-

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ment of the assembled company, not a voice responded. The headmaster came to the aid of the Diocesan Inspector with the repetition of the request in the most stentorian of tones. Still the silence remained unbroken. Threat followed remonstrance, but all to no purpose; the whole class remained obdurate. The agonised astonishment of the poor schoolmaster was all too obvious, and as the frowns of Vicar and Squire were being directed at him, his dejected appearance stirred a warm-hearted impulse in the breast of William George, the younger brother of the ringleader, who blurted out "I believe," and, after the manner of a flock of sheep that become swayed by the example of one of their own number as it jumps the fence, the rest of the class instantly took up the chime and repeated the whole Creed. Only one of them remained dumb. He was no other than David Lloyd George. His lips had remained compressed, but his eyes had flashed with anger when he saw how utterly his companions had broken faith. As punishment for organising the revolt, he was deprived of the good-conduct prize which would otherwise have been his, but no sooner was the school dispersed than he gave vent to his feelings by administering to his brother the soundest of thrashings.

The apparent failure of the plot, however, proved to be the prelude to victory, for the school managers thereafter avoided the possibility of an open clash with the susceptibilities of their Nonconformist pupils. The incident may well be described as a striking illustration of the adage that the child is father of the man. It marked the first flitting of that com-

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bative spirit which subsequently made Lloyd George—as Lord Rosebery so aptly observed on one occasion—“the great protagonist of Nonconformity.”

Village life is essentially that of a tribal community where each one knows, and is known of his neighbours. Llanystumdwy was no exception. Its inhabitants were linked together by a subtlety of kinship begotten of a community of interests. There was not a single house where David Lloyd—as he was familiarly called—was not known. Although the shoemaker's home was strictly a Baptist household, closely associated with the little chapel, known as Penymaes, away at Criccieth, the children regularly attended the weekly Band of Hope meeting at “Moriah”—the Calvinistic Methodist Chapel—in the village, where they were taught the “Sol-fa” system so much in vogue at that time throughout the Principality. At this Band of Hope David Lloyd was chosen to recite for the first time in public at the *Cyfarfod Cystadleuol*—an annual competitive meeting which was one of the events of the year in the life of the village, and there are still those who vividly remember the circumstances of that first appearance upon the platform, and who agreed that, child though he was, he scored a distinct success. The recitation was delivered with a fluency and a charm of declamation which completely captured the audience.

The general meeting-place for the boys of the village was the stone bridge that spans the river Dwyfawr as it leisurely wends its way to join the sea at Criccieth. Seated on its parapets, the boys would spend hours in gossip and wordy warfare on divers matters

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dear to the heart of youth. Happy was he among them who could sport a pocket-knife: such a possession was the accepted sign of a budding manhood. The day came when David Lloyd found himself the proud possessor of the coveted distinction, and after the manner of his predecessors he immediately used it to cut his initials "D.Ll.G." on one of the stone slabs of the bridge—where they are still to be seen. Not satisfied with having carved them in stone, he must needs cut them into the bark of a tree growing near the river—a tree that still displays the inscription, "D.Ll.G., December 16th, 1871."

"The land all around the village," as Lloyd George recalled in later years, "was strictly preserved, but that did not prevent us youngsters from having our full share of Nature's bounties in the form of apples and nuts. Whenever we were on one of these marauding expeditions, we used to have some of our companions to keep watch lest we should be caught by the keepers. A boy once killed a hare, and as a result he had to be sent away by his widowed mother from the farm she occupied; failing that, she was told she would be turned out of her home."

Though the villagers lived under the constant shadow of such grim possibilities, David Lloyd George was much too high-spirited to be cowed by the threatening spectre. On the contrary, he was always ready to organise "marauding expeditions" in quest of "Nature's bounties." His contemporaries still recall some of the incidents of those early expeditions. It is said of the owner of one of the largest orchards in the district, that as often as he detected any traces

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of a raid on his orchard he would invariably declare: "It's that David Lloyd that has done it." On one occasion, when the lad had managed to squeeze himself through an alluring gap in the hedge, he found himself, to his consternation, face to face with the owner of the orchard, who had been quietly awaiting his coming. "Where are you going?" he sternly demanded. "I am going back," replied the quick-witted boy, accompanying the word with the action.

He was even more passionately devoted to "marauding" in search of rabbits in the surrounding woods. One of his companions had a dog named "Whig" and in appreciation of the services of "Whig" its youthful owner was permitted to accompany David Lloyd on those expeditions. Later on, a fine black dog of the name of "Bismarck" was brought to the village from Hamburg by a sailor. That dog was given as a gift to one of the boys, and forthwith it became the inseparable companion of David Lloyd. The memory of his devotion to that dog is still one of the traditions of the village, for the one was rarely seen without the other.

The vigour of his active outdoor life was fully reflected in his soundness of physique. Save only the serious illness in his early childhood, his health was sufficiently robust to occasion no anxiety to his mother. At times, of course, there was some minor ailment, such as is common among children, but it always passed quickly by. When he was eleven years old he was laid low with a touch of indisposition, whereupon his uncle immediately wrote to Mr. R. D. Evans, at that time a medical student at Edinburgh, who

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appears to have cured the young patient of a similar ailment on a previous occasion. The following is a translation of Mr. Richard Lloyd's letter which was written in Welsh:

"DEAR FRIEND,

"I have one kindness to seek of you on this occasion on behalf of my sister. The lad David has had an attack similar to the one he had when you were last here, and it is a mercy that there were still on hand one or two of the powders which you prescribed for him. They brought him round on this occasion again. I am afraid of trusting to Drug Jones¹ lest he may have forgotten the right recipe. Would it be any bother to you to enclose the prescription in your next letter to your worthy sister? If you could so send it, we can have it in that way immediately, for I am glad to know that you are in the habit of writing home regularly each week. I shall be extremely grateful to you for such a favour. Your prescription has been so effective with the poor boy.

"Ever faithfully,
"R.L."

Many are the memories that still linger in Llanystumdwy in perpetuation of some of the daring exploits of his boyhood. On one occasion he nearly lost the fingers of his right hand through the mischievous action of one of his companions in suddenly giving a turn to the smithy winch on which his hand was resting. On another occasion, while at play, one

¹A local apothecary at that time in Criccieth.

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of his companions prodded him just below the eye with a pitchfork. A very little higher and the sight would have been lost, but fortunately the only permanent effect is the still-remaining scar. Shortly afterwards he led a party of boys in mock battle to a house that was in course of construction, and, feigning an attack upon the enemy's citadel, he took hold of the lintel, with the result that the structure fell and he was buried beneath the débris. The yell of his companions brought the neighbours to the scene, but to their amazement and joy the boy emerged unhurt.

Boys are characteristically quick to reflect the spirit of the hour and to adapt for their play any thrilling drama that may be occupying the world's stage. "I well remember," said Mr. Lloyd George in reminiscent vein on the occasion of a presentation to him in the year 1909 by his old schoolfellows in honour of his appointment to the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, "the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, and how the war was carried on in this village among us. The boys divided themselves into two parties—French and Prussians. The French entrenched themselves in the porch of the school, and there," he laughingly exclaimed, as he pointed to the burly form of a Carnarvonshire farmer, "is Napoleon, their leader."

Still, David Lloyd George, even in his boyhood, had come to realise, by the force of tragic circumstance, that there were conflicts waged within the arena of the little village more grim and real than those fought upon the playground of the school. He

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had witnessed the ruthless devastation which followed in the trail of the General Election of 1868, when Wales, with such fierceness of effort, had struggled to shake herself free from the heavy manacles that had so long shackled and bruised the soul of the nation.

Prior to the General Election of 1868, Mr. Douglas-Pennant had been returned as Tory Member for Carnarvonshire on no fewer than seven occasions, at none of which had there been even the whisper of opposition. But in 1868 the new spirit of independence brought forth a rival candidate selected by the people. The old régime, with its autocracy thus openly challenged, put forth all its powers of resistance to the new movement. Favours, cajolery, and threats were in turn resorted to in the hope of preventing the tenant farmers from breaking away from their traditional leash. But in spite of all such efforts, the leash snapped, and the farmers proceeded in bands to the polling booth to cast their votes boldly and unflinchingly for Mr. Jones Parry, who had been designated "the people's candidate." The result was as unexpected as it was unprecedented; Mr. Jones Parry was elected by a majority of forty-eight votes. In no constituency did that General Election produce so startling an upheaval as that in Carnarvonshire. The most powerful magnate in Wales had been rejected, and for the first time in the history of the constituency a Liberal member had been returned. That contest has a special interest by reason of the fact that it was the first election in which David Lloyd George took a part—a very small part, it is

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true, for he only carried a little flag displaying the party colours of the Liberal nominee, but, child though he was, he had lustily shouted, "Jones Parry for ever."

He recalls not merely the memories of that little flag, but the black shadows that followed in the wake of the contest. "It is the first election that I remember," he has observed in reminiscent vein. "I was a boy at school then, and I was in the blackest Tory parish in the land. I believe that my old uncle was the only Liberal in the village, though not the only Liberal in the parish. There were three or four in the parish besides him. One or two of them refused to vote for the Tory candidate, and two or three actually went further, and dared to record their votes for the Liberal. All of them received notice to quit. I remember that some lads who were at school with me in the same class, in a year or two had to leave the neighbourhood. I was very young, but young lads do not forget things of that sort. I knew the reason why they left—because the great Squire of the parish had turned their fathers out of their homes purely because they dared to vote for the Liberal candidate. It is," he added, "my first memory of politics."

In that harrowing memory of dark and troublous times, there lies the motive power of his later career.

It is no difficult task to trace out the forces and factors that have shaped his course. In conversation and in public utterance alike, he has frequently referred to them.

"Yonder smithy," he declared in 1909, in a speech at Llanystumdwy, as he waved his hand in the di-

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rection of a building near the bridge, "was my first Parliament, where night after night we discussed and decided all the abstruse questions relating to this world and the next in politics, in theology, in philosophy, and in science. There was nothing too wide and comprehensive for us to discuss, and we settled all the problems among ourselves without the slightest misgiving."

This village smithy was quite one of his favourite resorts. The glow of its fire had a special attraction on the cold, winter nights, when all without was dark and dreary, and equally attractive was the entertaining gossip of its habitués. There was always some topic under discussion or some tit-bit of gossipy news. The blacksmith was an elderly man of the name of Hugh Jones, and he was as typical a Welshman in the trend of his interests as he was in cast of countenance. A deacon at the Congregational chapel, his zeal for his denomination was intense. No matter how busy he might be, he could not refrain from having a tilt at the other sects.

It appears that the shoemaker's nephews were the only Baptist lads in Llanystumdwy. In the domain of school life, as in the wider sphere of life, association with an insignificant minority not infrequently means a perceptible loss of caste. Thus it was that David Lloyd, denied the support of any associates when the claims of the various denominations were being discussed by his companions, found it necessary, in his championship of the Baptist faith, to make good by force of argument what was lacking in numerical support.

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This rôle of Baptist protagonist he sustained in the village "Parliament" with as great zest as he did among his schoolfellows, with the result that the blacksmith found in the lad a dialectician worthy of his steel, in their frequent debates on the question of baptism, but so resourceful was David Lloyd George, and so quick to seize upon a point, that Hugh Jones found it extremely difficult, as he afterwards confessed to the lad's uncle, "to keep pace with the youngster."

Though Mr. Lloyd George has designated the village smithy as his "first Parliament," the real pivot of the village was the little workshop where Richard Lloyd plied his craft. It was there that the elders of the village Bethels were accustomed to meet every Monday, to exchange their views of the previous day's sermons in keen and eager discussion. In these discussions Mr. Richard Lloyd invariably maintained an impartial attitude. While controversy waxed hot, he would quietly go on with his work, breaking silence only when an appeal was made to him personally by one of the disputants for the confirmation of a statement, or when he felt that the clash of argument was becoming too reconant, and good feeling was being endangered.

In the trail of these disputations upon theological and denominational themes, there invariably followed discussions upon the main political questions of the day. Every evening David Lloyd George walked to Criccieth for a copy of the day's issue of the *Liverpool Mercury*. This his uncle would carefully peruse after the day's toil was over, invariably reading the leading

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articles and perusing with the keenest interest the reports of the debates in Parliament when the House was sitting. In the whole village there was no one so well abreast of the political news of the day, with the result that his workshop became the bureau of political information.

Richard Lloyd's workshop, however, filled a much larger place and purpose in the life of the community than that of a miniature Mars' Hill, where men might meet to hear the latest news or to take part in mere controversy. It was the radiating centre of counsel and of guidance. Fathers sought his advice in the choice of a calling for their sons. The more ambitious of the youths of the village consulted him in regard to their careers, while the local poets and litterateurs submitted to his criticism their literary efforts. In this connection there may be recalled one of the most pathetic of the memories of the little workshop.

A native of the district—one of the name of Thomas Jones—had in early childhood left with his parents for the neighbouring county of Denbigh. The family settled at Llangollen, and here Thomas Jones was apprenticed to a plumber and house decorator. But the youth felt the stirrings of the Muse within him, and in due time he blossomed forth as an accredited bard, with the bardic appellation of "Taliesin o Eifion." Incapacitated by ill-health from the pursuit of his occupation, he gave his inborn passion its bent with the result that he decided to compete for the Chair Ode at the National Eisteddfod which was to be held at Wrexham in August, 1876. Mindful of the keen

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interest which Richard Lloyd felt in the career of every native of the village, Taliesin turned instinctively to him for counsel and encouragement, submitting to his criticism and comment the Ode which he had composed for the competition. Some of the most striking passages in this ode were quoted by Mr. Richard Lloyd to a small eclectic circle among the habitués of the little workshop, and their unstinted approbation was regarded as an earnest of Taliesin's triumph.

In view of the close communal relationships which exist in all village life, it would obviously be impossible for a local board to transmit by post the bulky packet of a lengthy composition, addressed to the Secretary of the National Eisteddfod, without the knowledge of the community. The calligraphy of almost every inhabitant is known, and a communication of importance can scarcely pass through its local post-office without the risk of a trail of village gossip. Such leakage of information could not but be most embarrassing to the aspirant; for, should he fail in his efforts to win the trophy of the Chair, his sense of personal disappointment would be greatly aggravated by a diminished prestige in his own community. With a view, therefore, of obviating all such unpleasantness and of ensuring the full advantage of the secrecy of the *nom de plume* of its author which the composition bears, it has long been the rule of competing bards in Wales to arrange for transmission of their compositions from some post-office that lies well beyond the radius of their own immediate district.

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Taliesin o Eifion resorted to this customary ruse of the bardic fraternity. He arranged with Mr. Richard Lloyd that the ode should be dispatched direct from Llanystumdwy with the name of "Eusebius" as the *nom de plume* of its author. This was done on the last day of the month of May, 1876.

A few weeks later the National Eisteddfod met at Wrexham, and, after the fashion of the festival, the climax came with the ceremony of chairing the successful bard. The great pavilion was thronged with an audience of nearly ten thousand people. In accordance with the traditions of the ceremony, the bards and literati were massed on the platform, the vacant chair being placed in the centre in readiness for its occupancy by the successful bard. The great concourse settled into a tense stillness as the adjudication on the various odes was being given. When finally the spokesman of the adjudicators announced that they were unanimous in their judgment that the best ode was that which bore the name of Eusebius, a great shout of exultation rose spontaneously from the assembled throng. Then, in the hush that followed, Mynyddog, the famous conductor, called out, "*A ydyw Eusebius yn bresenol?*" ("Is Eusebius present?")

Alas, Eusebius was not there, for the day on which the ode had been posted marked the close of his fight against ill-health, his last words being "*Ydi yr awdl wedi ei gyrru i Wrecsam yn saff?*" ("Has the ode been safely sent to Wrexham?")

When a representative of the victor came forward with the explanation that Eusebius was no other than

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Taliesin o Eifion, who had already departed this life, the assembled bards immediately retired from the platform to the ante-room to consider the situation. On their return they bore emblems of mourning, and the vacant chair was draped in black. Madame Edith Wynne, in her prime as the sweetest singer of Wales, came forward amid the great silence that had fallen upon the vast assembly and, kneeling near the vacant chair, she began to sing the pathetic old Welsh ballad "*Dafydd y Gareg Wen*." But the tenseness of the occasion proved too much for her. Barely had the opening notes risen from her lips than both she and the audience utterly broke down, and their pent-up emotions found vent in tears. The pathos of the scene made a deep and a lasting impress upon the memory of the assembled crowd, and to this day the Wrexham Eisteddfod of 1876 is known as "the Eisteddfod of the Vacant Chair."

As can be readily imagined, so pathetic an event found an echoing sympathy on the hearth of the shoemaker's home, from which the triumphant ode had set out on its journey. "I well remember the sad circumstances associated with that vacant chair," exclaimed Mr. Lloyd George on the occasion of the National Eisteddfod at Wrexham nearly forty years later, when Taliesin's chair was again brought forth to view; "and never shall I forget the impression made upon my mind as a mere lad when the news was brought back to our home at Llanystumdwy."

Pathos, however, was not the only element that marked the inner life and emotions which found a sounding-board in Mr. Richard Lloyd's workshop.

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Not infrequently was heard there still deeper notes of tragedy. The villagers spokè of the smithy as their local Parliament, where debate was easy and gossip rife. But it was towards the shoemaker's workshop that they wended their steps when the heart was heavy and the burdens pressed. For Richard Lloyd was a kind of poor man's lawyer—always ready to give counsel to such as were perplexed and to extend sympathy to those in trouble.

To him, as he sat in his workshop, bending over the task that secured daily sustenance for the fatherless children under his roof, came tenant farmers, helpless over the devastation of their crops by the depredations of the jealously guarded game, and disheartened by the irksome conditions of the heavy financial obligations which the tenure of their farms entailed. The story of their grievances was rehearsed time and again with a dramatic vividness that both saddened and incensed the little circle of sympathetic listeners. Among these, there was no one who listened to their woes with more intentness and sadness than the young lad David Lloyd George. "Never shall I forget," he declared in later life, "the harrowing narratives I heard when a mere boy—told thousands of times—of excessive rents and goading oppressions. They are amongst the traditions of my childhood."

As the lad listened the fire of indignation would burn more and more vehemently within him, until there was fostered in him a passionate resolve "to do something for those poor fellows," as one of his associates once heard him say. Certain is it that it was

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in his uncle's workshop, listening to the heartbreaking narratives of a dispirited peasantry, that there was first begotten in him that passion for land reform which has proved to be the most dominant and persistent of his political pursuits.

But among the influences to which he thus re-acted during the period of his boyhood, one of the most stimulating was, unquestionably, that which inhered in the name and memory of Abraham Lincoln. And the explanation is obvious. Lincoln was among the most cherished of Richard Lloyd's heroes. Indeed, it is not too much to say that, when Lincoln was first elected to the Presidency of the United States, there was not a man on either side of the Atlantic who felt the thrill of so romantic an achievement in a keener degree than did the lonely shoemaker in the remote valley under the towering slopes of Snowdon. The romance of such a triumph in blazing so glorious a trail from a poverty-stricken shanty in the backwoods of America to the occupancy of the White House stirred his emotions to their deepest depths. Time and again, as he pounded away at his lapstone, he would dwell upon it, with an unabating fervour, as he conversed with the peasants who were accustomed to meet in his little workshop. And great was his distress when, four years later, came the tragic news of Lincoln's assassination. At that time his widowed sister and her fatherless children had become part of his household. In devotion to the memory of his hero, he procured a large portrait of Lincoln and it was accorded the place of honour in the little homestead. When his nephews were

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old enough to understand, Richard Lloyd would rehearse to them, again and again, to their unabating joy, the romantic story of Lincoln's life—with his birth in a windowless log cabin, his persistent struggle with poverty and his unyielding determination to triumph over the formidable handicaps of adverse circumstances; and he would always urge on them to "remember Lincoln" and seek in the romance of his career both a stimulus and an inspiration in their efforts to surmount the obvious difficulties that lay in their path.

Not in vain did he thus seek to communicate to the two fatherless lads his own passionate hero-worship. They caught the contagion, with the result that they, too, came to venerate the memory of Lincoln. While he was still a boy, David read and re-read the story of Lincoln's life, and it left so indelible an impression upon him that he never lost it. At every turn of his career, he found both guidance and inspiration in the example of Lincoln. When he qualified as a solicitor and set up in practice, he copied the following precepts, which he found in one of the biographies of the illustrious President, and placed them on his desk as a daily reminder:—

"There's a vague popular belief that lawyers are necessarily dishonest. Let no man, choosing the law for a calling, for a moment yield to the popular belief. Never stir up litigation. As a peace-maker, the lawyer has a supreme opportunity of being a good man."

He made these precepts the watch-word of his calling, with the result that, even when it would

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obviously be to his personal advantage to do otherwise, he never stirred up litigation. And years afterwards, when he was appointed to the Presidency of the Board of Trade, with its prescriptive powers for mediating in industrial disputes between employers of labour and their employees, he entered upon the duties of the position with the avowed determination "to observe Lincoln's precept to be a peace-maker."

Even more significant is the fact that, when in the throes of the Great War, the situation was becoming desperate for the Allies, he found himself driven to the conclusion that, in the circumstances, no course was open to the British Government, if the triumph of British arms was to be ensured, other than to resort to the drastic expedient of compulsory military service—in violation of the long cherished traditions of the British people—he fortified himself with the reflection that Abraham Lincoln—the greatest democrat in the world's history—had, in like circumstances of a desperate situation, felt justified in resorting to the same course. In vain did his colleagues and even the most intimate of his friends plead with him to refrain from the advocacy of so drastic a course; and the more they urged that by such advocacy he would imperil his popularity and even his future—"as the country would not stand military conscription at any price"—the more did he turn to the memory of Lincoln for fresh sustenance in his determination to see the thing through.

In those days he would recall and repeat Lincoln's courageous words—when his political advisers were strenuously striving to dissuade him from carrying

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out his drastic measures for more men for the armies in the field, on the ground that such measures would ruin his chances of re-election—"It is not a personal question at all. It matters not what becomes of me. We must have the men. If I go down, I intend to go like the *Cumberland*, with my colours flying." And thus it came about that, when even the leading statesmen in Britain, though acutely conscious of the all-dominating exigencies of the military situation, instinctively shrank back from embarking on a course which would so manifestly do violence to the most cherished traditions of the British people, Lloyd George found himself emboldened by the memory of Lincoln's example in a like crisis, to insist, even at the risk of jeopardising his own political future, that the men should be provided even though it would be necessary to compel them to take up arms.

Richard Lloyd lived to see the fatherless lad, whom he had brought up on his own humble hearth, accede to the highest position in the service of the British Crown; but he made no secret of the fact that the significance of the achievement was enhanced in his eyes by the consideration that it had been hailed in the Press as a striking parallel to that furnished in the career of Abraham Lincoln. The path, which had led from the shoemaker's home in a remote Welsh village to the occupancy of the official residence of the Prime Minister of Great Britain, bore a striking likeness, in the arduousness of its ascent and the summit of its attainment, to that traversed by Abraham Lincoln from a log cabin to White House. The thrilling romance of the backwoodsman's son had

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found its duplication in that of the shoemaker's nephew.

When, in the autumn of the year 1923, Lloyd George landed in New York, he forthwith set out on a visit to Springfield, Illinois. "Much as I wanted to see your great land," he declared to a gathering of its leading citizens who had assembled to welcome him, "there was one spot that I was anxious to see above all others and that was the home of Abraham Lincoln—the inspirer of Democracy not merely in your country but in all lands. I have come here," he said, "to pay my humble and reverent tribute of respect to the memory of one of the great men of the world. I have read many of his biographies. His career was highly successful, judged by every standard of success—from the wretched log cabin at Kentucky on to the official residence of the President of the greatest Republic on earth. It seems," he continued, "a triumphal march enough for any ambition, and yet his life is, in many respects, one of the saddest of human stories and even the tragic end comes as a relief. His influence upon our democracy in England is deep and permanent." In that tribute we could have justly added that Lincoln's influence had proved one of the most vitalising factors in the development of his own course and career. The glow of hero-worship, which he had caught in the days of his early boyhood from Richard Lloyd, has never waned. The spell remains unbroken.

II

THE WELSH PULPIT. FIRST STEPS IN
THE LAW AND IN POLITICS

CHAPTER II

THE WELSH PULPIT. FIRST STEPS IN THE LAW AND IN POLITICS

WITH his entry upon his fourteenth year David Lloyd George completed the full curriculum of the village school. Naturally enough, the completion of his school days served to bring home, with increasing force, to his widowed mother and his uncle that problem of the lad's future which had been the theme of many an anxious talk.

In normal circumstances, a Welsh village lad, nursed in a home so saturated with Nonconformist traditions, would instinctively make his way to the pulpit, for at that time the pulpit was the only sphere in Wales which afforded an opening to any gifted youth who aspired to a position of real influence and authority among his own countrymen. Moreover—and herein lies the weight of the consideration—the Welsh pulpit at the time of Mr. Lloyd George's boyhood was recognized on every hand as the main force in the national life of Wales. Its glamour was at its meridian. For a century it had attracted to its service the most gifted men in each generation, whose names had become household words in every part of the principality.

Their assemblies know them no more, but the grave has not muffled their eloquence, for its echoes

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are still reverberating among the Welsh hills. "You cannot go into a peasant's house, or into a shepherd's cottage," declared Lloyd George in a speech in the House of Commons, "without hearing the names of the great Nonconformist preachers who made Wales what it is to-day."

The tribute had a significance of its own. It reflected the glamour which the achievements of the great divines had always exercised over Lloyd George. As far back as he can remember, he was familiar with the names of all the eminent preachers of Wales, and with the romantic stories of their careers. Whenever any of the religious bodies in the district had their *Cwrddau mawr*—as the preaching services were described—he never missed an opportunity of attending, and, young though he was, he responded wholeheartedly to the fascination of the scene. "Never heard anything more eloquent than his sermon; I was quite overwhelmed," he wrote, after listening to a sermon by the late Herber Evans.¹ "Splendid; he is a real orator," was his comment after hearing Principal Thomas Charles Edwards² preach at Pwllheli.

These tributes lay bare the earliest trend of his own predilections. Deep called unto deep; the burning words fired his own inborn passion for public utterance. Had he been free to choose his path, unquestionably he would have followed with eagerness in the footsteps of the great Nonconformist orators,

¹ One of the greatest of the pulpit orators of Wales.

² An eminent Welsh divine who was, at that time, the principal of the University College of Wales.

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for the Welsh pulpit had a special attraction for him, and in that vista of multitudes swayed by the voice of the preacher, like a field of corn by the murmur of the summer's breeze, he discerned the greatest of enchantments.

His inbred predilection for the pulpit had already been greatly stimulated by the subtle influences of his environment. He had barely entered upon his teens before he had been baptised, on confession of faith, by his uncle, in the rivulet which flowed in front of the chapel at Criccieth and he regularly attended the three services which were held each Sunday. At the close of the day's services, he would invariably walk back the two miles to Llanystumdwy in company with his uncle with whom he would discuss "the points" in the day's services. He also took part in the week night service and frequently gave an address on some Biblical theme.

Strongly attracted as he thus was to the Welsh Pulpit, with its obviously wide scope for the full exercise of his own natural aptitude for oratory, there lay in his path one great barrier and it was insurmountable. He was linked by two generations of his own kinsmen to a religious body which was strongly opposed to a paid ministry as being "unscriptural," and which expressly decreed in its constitution that each church within its community should be governed by elders or pastors of its own choosing, "who shall serve the church by attending to all its administrations and exercising all necessary supervision over its members, and preaching, all of which services are to be rendered *voluntarily* and *gratuitously*."

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It was therefore impossible for him, though in anxious search of a career that would allow his gifts their fullest and most congenial scope, to give heed to the alluring call of the Welsh pulpit without doing violence to the most sacred traditions of the hearth on which he had been so carefully reared, and to the principles which he had already made his own. Just as a pebble cast into a pond sends the undulations on the surface to the remotest edge of the water, so the secession which had been precipitated as far back as the year 1798 was still working out its unspent force in directing the destiny of one of the most brilliant of Welsh youths. David Lloyd George clearly recognised that in that secession hostages had been given for him, and for that reason he did not hesitate to turn away from the contemplation of the Nonconformist ministry, attractive as the sphere undoubtedly was, to seek his life-work in some other direction.

Thus it came about that Wales lost a great preacher—one who, by the genius and passion of his oratory, would have sustained the highest traditions of her pulpit, to find in him, in later years, the most authoritative exponent of her nationality and the most eloquent spokesman of her democracy.

Finding the path to the ministry thus barred to him, it would only have been natural if the lad had sought to follow in his father's footsteps by embarking upon the scholastic profession. As a matter of fact such a course seemed at that time to be opening out in front of him. Already the headmaster of the

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Llanystumdwy school had marked his innate cleverness, and had provided an advanced grade of lessons for him. Schoolmasters, as a rule, rightly magnify their calling, and strive to find assistants and successors who will be worthy of it. The Llanystumdwy headmaster was no exception, and the Rector of the parish, in response to his suggestion, endeavoured to secure David Lloyd George for service in the school. He duly called upon Mrs. George and her brother with the offer of a pupil-teachership for their lad as the first stage in his preparation for the scholastic profession. Although no condition was mentioned, both mother and uncle felt that within its shadow lurked an unexpressed proviso. A pupil-teachership in the village school had invariably carried with it the necessity of attendance at the parish church, and that fact alone sufficed to make both of them utterly impervious to the rector's suggestion.

"I recall," declared Mr. Lloyd George in after years, "that in the little village school I sat side by side with a lad who is to-day a canon of the Church of England. He was then a Calvinistic Methodist, but he wanted to become a teacher. Had he stuck to his faith he would have been a miller, like his father. One of the Welsh bishops to-day hails from that corner of Carnarvonshire. He, too, was once a Non-conformist lad. Had I followed his example and renounced the faith I was reared in, I should certainly be a vicar, and perhaps a canon, by now." "No, a bishop!" chimed in "the Voice," which so often expresses, with apt conciseness, the popular feeling. Even the certainty of so exalted a destiny would not

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in the slightest degree have softened the sternness with which the lad's guardians set their faces against the proposal with its implied contingencies. Mrs. George is said to have declared that she would rather see her boy grow up to break stones on the roadside than see him turn his back upon the little chapel in which he had been brought up.

David Lloyd George had frequently heard his mother refer in words of deep gratitude to a Liverpool lawyer who had proved a true friend to her and her husband in the early days of their married life and who in the dark days of her bereavement, generously relieved her of the anxiety connected with the realisation of the effects and appurtenances of the little farmstead. In the haze of those grateful memories the man and his profession became merged into an identity, with the result that in her eyes the rôle of the lawyer became suffused with the glory of the good Samaritan. David Lloyd so caught the glow of his mother's admiration that he became obsessed with the ambition to become a lawyer. Considerations of finance, however, threatened to block the way to its realisation, for the outlay would be heavy while the resources of the little home were extremely slender. However, the stress of necessity served again to bring to light the readiness of his uncle to bear the full weight of the burden.

By dint of rigid economy, Mr. Richard Lloyd had been able to save a small sum of money by way of provision for those declining years when he would be no longer able to pursue his daily toil at the shoemaker's bench. These savings he readily decided to

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draw upon for the necessary expense in the attainment of the lad's desire to prepare for the law. "I can never tell how much I owe to this good man," declared Mr. Lloyd George in later years, as he reviewed with gratitude the trodden path of his own career. "He never married, but he set himself the task of educating the children of his sister as a supreme and sacred duty. To that duty he devoted his time, his energy, and all his savings."

This initial problem having been solved, a fresh difficulty presented itself in the matter of the special preparation required for the Preliminary Law Examination. The difficulty was no small one, for among the scheduled subjects were Latin and French, and in neither of these had David Lloyd George received any previous tuition. But the shoemaker and his nephew were cast in too heroic a mould to be deterred by a difficulty of that kind. Each of them had the will that never fails to discover the proverbial way. The local schoolmaster was known to be proficient in Latin, and it was therefore an easy matter to arrange with him for instruction in that language—but he knew no French, and, as there was no one in the village to whom recourse could be had, it became necessary to devise other means.

It so happened that at that time "Cassell's Popular Educator" was being published in parts and circulated throughout the land. Some of the parts found their way into the shoemaker's home at Llanystumdwy, and, among their contents, were articles setting out in a clear and popular style a course of instruction in the French language. A perusal of these articles

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kindled in Mr. Richard Lloyd the desire and the determination so to master the subject as to be able to give his nephew the needful help. A French grammar and dictionary were forthwith procured, and uncle and nephew applied themselves to the task with a zeal that knew no weariness, "sitting," as Mr. Lloyd George himself has said, "for hours together, laboriously spelling out the rudiments of a language." And thus the old man and the lad trod together the steep and toilsome path that led to ultimate triumph.

It was quite in keeping with Mr. Richard Lloyd's characteristic reserve that none of his neighbours knew to what end his nephew was directing his studies, even the schoolmaster being left unenlightened as to the real purpose of the Latin lessons. One day, however, towards the latter end of November, 1877, the villagers, after their manner, were much exercised over the unexplained cause of the departure of Mr. Richard Lloyd and his nephew on a long railway journey. Speculation was rife, but to none of them was it revealed that they were going to Liverpool, where the lad was to sit for the preliminary law examination. However, it was not long before the mystery was revealed, for early in December the whole village was agog with the news that "David Lloyd had passed to become an attorney." Naturally enough, David Evans hailed the success of his pupil as a triumph for his school, and he signalled so unique an event by a special entry in the school log-book:

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“1877. December 8.

D. Ll. George, 1st cl. pupil, successful in passing the preliminary examination of the Incorporated Law Society at Liverpool, and received the certificate.”

This success was in due time followed by the introduction of the lad to the practical work of the law. As he was only fifteen years of age at the time, it was decided that, preparatory to his taking up his articles, he should spend some months as a junior clerk in a solicitor's office, and so gain the necessary experience of the work and procedure. The choice of an office occasioned no trouble. In the neighbouring seaport town of Portmadoc, some six miles away, there was a firm of solicitors, Messrs. Breese, Jones and Casson, that had a very large practice. Mr. Breese, the senior partner, though a Churchman, was a staunch Liberal, and he held the position of Liberal Agent for the adjoining county of Merioneth as well as for the southern portion of Carnarvonshire. These considerations sufficed to lead Mr. Richard Lloyd to choose their office as likely to afford the best advantages for his nephew. Accordingly, in July, 1878, David Lloyd George left Llanystumdwy to enter upon his work at Portmadoc, and on January 28th, 1879—eleven days after his sixteenth birthday—he was articled to Mr. Casson, the junior member of the firm.

Of this red-letter day in his career, Mr. Lloyd George has declared: “It was not an easy matter for me to thus start studying for the law. Small

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sums are big to small people, and the £80 to £100 which I had to pay for my articles, the money for the Government stamps, the heavy prices of law books, the expense of the journey to Liverpool for the preliminary examination, the still greater expense of the journey to London for the final examination—all these mounted up to a large sum."

Keenly sensible of the heavy drain which all this had entailed upon his uncle's purse, he was from the outset determined that the expenditure should be justified by its results. He threw himself into the work with zest, and his natural abilities found full and congenial scope in the range and variety of his daily task and duties. In virtue of the fact that the senior partner held the post of Clerkship of the Peace for Merionethshire, and that the Clerkship to the Magistrates in two petty sessional divisions was vested in the firm the young clerk had ample opportunities for acquiring a practical knowledge of legal procedure. All matters appertaining to county administration came within the jurisdiction of Quarter Sessions—matters dealing for example with agricultural rating, assessments of land and houses, as well as matters that hinged upon the administration of licensing and criminal law—came daily within the range of his observation and duty, and as a result he rapidly acquired a most intimate knowledge of the work of the office.

A well-known Welsh bard has testified that on one occasion, when visiting the office during the period of Lloyd George's articleship, his attention was specially directed to the young clerk by the senior

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partner. "Mark that lad," Mr. Breese remarked, "some day he will be one of the leading men in the land. I have never known anyone who can master a thing so quickly as can he." This testimony may be supplemented by the personal reminiscences of one who was also an articled clerk in the same office during a portion of the time when Mr. Lloyd George was serving his articles¹:—

"We sat for some time at the same desk. In the first months of his articleship he used to come daily from Llanystumdwy, and he invariably carried a book with him. I well recollect that Hallam's 'History of England' was the first book that he brought. I remember riding over to Llanystumdwy to obtain his signature, as well as that of his mother, in connection with his articles; and I particularly remember that, after he had been at the office only a few weeks, he prepared a summons, for some offence or other, to an applicant. I told him then what I myself had been told, that we were to be very careful in the preparation of the summonses, and that on no account were they to go out of the office until they had been approved by one of the principals of the firm. In the particular summons which he had prepared there was a slight informality. I drew his attention to it and urged him not to prepare any summonses in the future without first submitting them to Mr. Casson. To this he replied, 'I want to learn'—a remark which may well be regarded as an index to his characteristic determination."

¹ Specially contributed to this volume by Mr. J. Jones Morris, solicitor, Portmadoc.

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In the autumn of the year 1880, the late Lord Salisbury delivered a speech at Taunton, in the course of which he assailed, with characteristic invective, the Liberal Ministry of the day. Lord Salisbury's gibes had the immediate effect of incensing the young clerk, and instinctively he sought the medium of the Press for the expression of his wounded feelings. With the *nom de plume* of "Brutus," he contributed an article to the columns of the *North Wales Express*—a weekly newspaper published at Carnarvon—in which he dealt in vigorous fashion with the offending speech. This was Mr. Lloyd George's first contribution in print, and so highly did the editor appraise its trenchant criticism, that he accorded it a prominent place on the "leader" page. Although emanating from a youth who was only in his seventeenth year, the article displayed an intimacy with current politics, and a deftness of phraseology which would have done credit to an experienced politician.

Contemporaneously with the appearance of the article came the exciting news that Mr. Watkin Williams, the Liberal Member for Carnarvonshire, had been appointed to a High Court Judgeship, thus creating a vacancy in the representation of the county.

The contest at once brought the fervid young politician at Portmadoc into the full fray. Again his pen became transformed into a scalping-knife. In the midst of the contest he contributed to the columns of the *North Wales Express*, over his pen-name of "Brutus," a special article in the form of an open letter to the Conservative candidate. Incisive in

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phrase and trenchant in style, the article so impressed the editor that he gave it distinction in flaming headlines on that week's posters—an honour that greatly gratified the youthful correspondent.

This by-election proved eventful in Mr. Lloyd George's career. It brought him for the first time into personal contact with Members of Parliament, and it gave him his first taste of political polemics. He accompanied the leading speakers to the various meetings. On the day of the election he acted as one of the appointed committee-men for his party in the rural district of Dolbenmaen, and at the close of the poll he journeyed to Carnarvon as one of the party custodians of the ballot-box. In a special degree the contest had the effect of intensifying his inbred passion for politics. The atmosphere of the meetings, the excitement of the crowds, and the glamour of the torchlight processions acted on his impressionable nature like glowing sparks upon tinder.

That this feeling was no mere passing phase begotten of the excitement of the occasion is evidenced by the fact that, when a year later he paid his first visit to London, he immediately made the House of Commons his first objective. Parliament was not then in session, and he was therefore unable to gratify his long-cherished desire to listen to a Parliamentary debate. He discovered, however, that admission to the House of Commons was open to visitors on Saturdays, and accordingly he made his way thither on Saturday, November 12th, 1881. "Went to Houses of Parliament," he wrote in his diary, "but very

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much disappointed with them. Grand buildings outside, but inside they are crabbed, small, and suffocating, especially the House of Commons. I will not say that I eyed the assembly in a spirit similar to that in which William the Conqueror eyed England on his visit to Edward the Confessor as the region of his future domain. O vanity!" he added in a note of self-depreciation which the romance of his subsequent career so completely discounted.

Immediately on his return from London, he availed himself of the opportunity for developing his embryonic gift for public speaking by joining the Portmadoc Debating Society, which concerned itself with the discussion of public questions.

Though he was the youngest member of the society, he quickly gained the reputation of being its ablest debater. His greatest triumph was scored in the debate which took place in November, 1882, on the question: "Was the late war in Egypt justifiable?" when he delivered a speech of such marked brilliancy that it received the distinction of a tribute in the local Press. "Those persons who were in ignorance respecting the causes which led to the late war in Egypt," declared the *North Wales Express*, "would have done well to have visited the Portmadoc Debating Society on the 13th inst. There was a debate on the war, and some of the speeches were excellent, especially the speech of Mr. Lloyd George. Mr. George, in a most eloquent harangue, full of clinching arguments, denounced the war as a wicked one. The foreign control was a great injustice to the Egyptians. The peasants of the country were

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being driven to the greatest poverty by the shameful taxation imposed by the rotten Government of the country. They were glad to get any man to come and deliver them from their pitiful state. Arabi Pasha was a man that had risen from amongst them—a man who knew all about their wants because he had felt their wants himself.”

Though the brilliancy of the speech failed to convert the majority of those who were present, it nevertheless created an instinctive feeling that the future course of so forceful a speaker lay in the direction of the House of Commons. “The speech delivered by Mr. George against the war was very good,” declared the *Carnarvon Herald* in a reference to the debate, “and it would probably have gained praise had it been delivered in the House of Commons. The matter, the words, and the style, together with the freedom with which it was delivered, took everybody by surprise and made a deep impression upon all present.”

The fame of the young orator gradually spread beyond the bounds of the district, and the impression deepened that he was a youth of far-reaching ambitions. In the month of June, 1883, a fancy fair was held at Carnarvon, and among the features of the literary stall was a list of names of local celebrities, to each of whom an apposite quotation was attached in satiric reference to his outstanding characteristics.

In this list, which duly appeared in the local press, the name of David Lloyd George figured with a quotation from Dr. Johnson:

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"When first the college rolls receive his name,
The young enthusiast quits his ease for fame,
Resistless burns the fever of renown,
Caught from the strong contagion of the gown."

Harmless as was the reference it had the effect of rasping his feelings. He resented the reference to his thirst for renown. "Perhaps," he wrote, with the note of interrogation which did duty for a feeling of dubiety, "it will be gratified. I believe that it depends entirely on what forces of pluck and *industry* I can muster."

As illustrating the thoroughness with which Lloyd George set himself to "quit ease for fame," his landlady at Portmadoc frequently remonstrated with him for sitting so late over his books, and she even expressed her fear that that habit of his would not only undermine his health but "possibly put the house on fire some night." Even after she had passed her fourscore years, she still delighted to recall that when he had triumphantly returned from London with his "parchment," he had chaffed her about her needless remonstrances.

III

SOLICITOR AND ADVOCATE

CHAPTER III

SOLICITOR AND ADVOCATE

THE year 1884 proved a most eventful year in the career of David Lloyd George.

It brought in its train a trinity of outstanding events: his coming of age; his first experience of a Parliamentary debate; and, most important of all, his triumph, with honours, at his Final Law Examination. The second of these memorable incidents occurred under cover of the last. Taking advantage of his visit to the metropolis in connection with his "Final," he secured an order of admission to the Strangers' Gallery in the House of Commons. He was fortunate on the occasion of his visit, for it proved to be one of those exciting days when party passions were in full spate, and the party leaders were to the fore. An amendment had been moved from the Front Bench of the Opposition on the report stage of the Franchise Bill which was then before the House.

With his passionate interest in politics, the young lad was sensitively attuned to his surroundings and every nerve in his body vibrated under the thrill of the occasion, notably when Mr. Gladstone was speaking. The experience made an indelible impression on his mind and memory as is evident from the fol-

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lowing vivid account which he contributed to the pages of *Young Wales*,¹ on the occasion of the death of the illustrious statesman, fifteen years later:—

“When I first heard Mr. Gladstone, in the year 1884, he was conducting through the House of Commons the Franchise Bill of that year.

“The late Mr. Cecil Raikes—no special favourite of Mr. Gladstone’s—had moved an amendment claiming a redistribution of seats as an essential concomitant of the extension of the suffrage. The tone of the speech was somewhat calculated to offend a nature so sensitive to every taunt of dishonourable dealing as Mr. Gladstone’s. He was told that, if the Government had been sincere and genuine in their desire to redress the evils of the representative system, they would have accepted without demur the Conservative proposal. The speech aroused Mr. Gladstone’s ire to an extent quite unaccountable to me. His reply was fierce. He lashed Mr. Raikes with wrath. And yet it was not so much what he said that struck me. I read the speech on the following morning, and, had I not heard it, I could not have believed it capable of producing any exceptional impression. But it did, however, create quite a sensational effect for the moment. It was due to the magic of his delivery. He played with the words ‘sincere and genuine,’ introduced and re-introduced them with furious reiteration, repeated them with an infinite variety in inflexion and modulation of voice—all indicative of unmeasured contempt and derision for his now cowering

¹ A monthly magazine edited by the author.

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critic. He drove his finger at him as if it were a rapier. I can well remember the painful silence that fell upon the crowded Tory benches when the speech was over. It was as if they had been prostrated by a succession of shocks from a powerful electric battery. I believe that the amendment, important and ultimately successful as it was, would have been negatived without a division had it not been for the interposition of a lithe young man, who got up on the floor of the House below the gangway, and, in a merry and audacious utterance, completely restored his party to animation. This was Lord Randolph Churchill. He soon had many Members on both sides of the House laughing gaily over his daring quips and cranks about the Prime Minister who had 'tried to terrify the House.' All enjoyed it save Mr. Gladstone himself. He sat with solemn mien and an aspect reproachful of such merriment. This experience explained to me how Mr. Gladstone held such sway over all who came within range of his oratory."

A few weeks later Lloyd George again journeyed to London, but on this occasion it was for the eventful purpose of being formally sworn in before the Master of the Rolls as a duly qualified solicitor.

"The ceremony," he wrote home in a description of the formalities of the occasion, "disappointed me. The Master of the Rolls, so far from having anything to do with it, was actually listening to some Q.C., at the time, and some fellow of a clerk swore us to a lawyerly demeanour at the back of the Court, and off we shambled to the Petty Bag Office to sign the Rolls."

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Some four years earlier his uncle and his mother, with an eye to the children's future, had removed their home from Llanystumdwy to Criccieth, where they had taken up the tenancy of a small house under the shadow of the dismantled castle which has played so important a part in Welsh history. The back parlour of the house was allotted to him as his office, while the front room was used as the living-room for the household. No one knew better than did the young lawyer's mother of the deep and inherited dread with which the Welsh peasantry regarded a lawyer's office. For them a visit to the attorney represented as nerve-wracking an experience as that to a dentist—a device which should be resorted to only after every other expedient had proved futile. When therefore her son was thus established in an office of his own, she forthwith set herself to denude a visit to the attorney of its traditional terror. This she did by investing the ordeal with an atmosphere of friendliness. From the front room, she was able to see every client that came to the front door, and consequently the heartiest of greetings was accorded him as he was conducted to the office in the back room. And when the client subsequently emerged from the office, he was invariably invited to step into the front room to have a refreshing cup of tea, and over the friendly cup his anxieties were allayed and his faith in the young lawyer's capabilities for promoting his interests became perceptibly deepened. In this way the mother, with her inbred sagacity and her unfailing resource in an emergency, played no small part in the task of building up the son's prac-

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tice and of adding to his clientele when he most needed help.

Gratifying as such a triumph undoubtedly was to those at home, it nevertheless brought with it a shadow of anxiety. "After an apprenticeship to the law of five and a half years"—to quote Lloyd George's testimony—"my uncle's small fortune was exhausted, and I had not money enough left even to buy my robes. In Wales a solicitor has to appear robed before he gets audience in the County Court. The robes cost about three guineas, and, if I remember rightly, I had to wait till I had got one or two cases before I was able to meet this outlay." While he was waiting for clients, the restless energy of his nature sought an outlet in other directions. He took up his pen afresh, and in the autumn of that year he contributed to the *North Wales Observer*, under the head of "Nota Bene—By a 'J' Pen," a series of articles which reflected the closest intimacy with the exigencies of the political situation.

"Mr. Chamberlain," he declared in one of his contributions, "is unquestionably the future leader of the people. Anyone who reads his speeches will know the reason why. He does not argue closely, like Sir Charles Dilke, nor does he discourse with the polished eloquence of Mr. Trevelyan; and yet his speeches have far greater effect upon public opinion than those of either of the two. The explanation is ready. He understands the sympathies of his countrymen. It is, therefore, that he speaks intelligibly and straightforwardly, like a man who is proud of the opinions which he holds. He does not hedge round his sen-

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tences lest the viper sting them. He is a Radical, and doesn't care who knows it so long as the people do. He is convinced that the aristocracy stands in the way of the development of the rights of man, and he says so unflinchingly, though he be howled at as an ill-mannered demagogue by the whole kennelry of gorgeous aristocracy and of their fawning minions."

"Lord Randolph Churchill," he wrote in another of the articles, in a reference to Lord Randolph Churchill's exploits in the Parliamentary arena, "has succeeded at length in drawing the badger, and he has now good reason to regret his temerity in doing so, for the brute has severely bitten him. But was it a case of drawing, or of being drawn? The facts would rather incline in favour of the latter construction. The Red Indians decoy their enemies on to pursuit by simulating flight, and when, by this ruse, they have enticed their unwary pursuers into a position where retreat is impossible, they turn round and annihilate them. That is the illustration I believe most applicable to the catastrophe which last week befell Lord Randolph. He was lured on to hot pursuit by the spectacle of a retiring foe, and when retreat on his part had become impossible, he was subjected for his indiscretion to the cruelest scalping within Parliamentary recollection. The noble lord will henceforth appreciate more fully the value of the old adage that 'discretion is the better part of valour.'"

In the month of January, 1885, the newly fledged solicitor extended the frontiers of his professional

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sphere by opening an office in the neighbouring town of Portmadoc, and henceforth this became the centre of his professional activities. He had been established just a month in the new office when he was called upon to appear in court for the first time in the rôle of advocate. The case was purely one of common assault. In an altercation between two neighbours in the district, hot words had led to blows, and in consequence a police-court summons had been issued against the aggressor. Ten minutes before the appointed time of hearing, Mr. Lloyd George was asked to appear for the defence. Notwithstanding the simplicity of the issues, he "felt so timorous"—to quote his own words—that he was inclined to refuse to take up the case. Other considerations, however, bore down his reluctance. He had only just time to rush into court, but he made so strong a plea on behalf of his first client that the magistrates decided to bind over both parties to keep the peace. As he subsequently confessed, the result was as much a surprise to the offending party as it was a delight to himself.

Lloyd George had not been long in practice before the poaching fraternity learnt to turn to him for professional services, as often as they were summoned to appear before the magistrates to answer for their deeds. They quickly saw that to his skill and resourcefulness as an advocate he added a sympathetic consideration for the circumstances of their lot. Even at that time he was stirred to indignation at the glaring contrast between the costly expenditure so readily embarked upon by the local squires for

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the preservation of game on their estates and the callous neglect of the much greater interests of the people of those districts, forced as they were to live in dilapidated cottages unfit for human habitation, and to eke out so bare a subsistence that many of them had no alternative other than to seek food by the tortuous ways of poaching. By thus taking up, with a zeal which obviously transcended the acknowledged limits of professional service, the cause of the very class whom the magistrates regarded with such an absolute abhorrence, Lloyd George soon found himself the *bête noire* of the justices. He knew that in all such cases judgment hinged, not upon the evidence of witnesses, but solely upon the inbred prejudices of the magistrates themselves. In such circumstances the clash between Bench and advocate was as inevitable as that night follows day, and in court after court in the district the inevitable happened. Scenes were constantly taking place in which the young solicitor boldly and unflinchingly stood up to the Bench and openly accused it of bias and partiality.

Magistrates in the adjacent districts became horrified at the fact that there was in the neighbourhood a solicitor who had been guilty of such unprecedented presumption as to dare to impugn the repute and impartiality of their order in the administration of justice. Consequently, Lloyd George was blacklisted, and his appearance at any of the petty divisional courts, either in Carnarvonshire or in Merionethshire, had the effect of putting up the backs of the local justices from a sense of danger, after the fashion of a cat when a pugnacious little terrier comes

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her way. Consequently, he found himself subjected to such treatment as had never been meted to other advocates.

Happily, there were occasions when his natural aptitude for ready wit had the effect of lessening the tension. For instance, he appeared on one occasion before the County Bench of Merionethshire, which was presided over by the late Samuel Pope, Q.C., then in the heyday of his fame as the most eminent counsel at the Parliamentary Bar. In conducting his case before this tribunal, Mr. Lloyd George seems to have laid down certain legal propositions with an assurance that bordered upon absolute authority. "No, no," chimed in the burly barrister on the Bench, "this won't do. Mr. Lloyd George is laying down the law as though he were a judge in the Court of Appeal. It is necessary for me to point out that we here do not believe in the infallibility of Mr. Lloyd George." Like a flash of lightning came Lloyd George's retort as, with twinkling eye, he glanced at the genial figure of Mr. Pope: "Neither do we in these parts believe in the infallibility of the *Pope*."

Although constantly harassed in his vocation as an advocate by the violent prejudices and antipathies of the local magistrates towards himself, Lloyd George had the satisfaction of finding in the County Court a tribunal where cases were tried upon their merits and where justice was untainted by partisanship. Early in the year 1885, Mr. Brynmor Jones,¹ was

¹ Some years later, he relinquished his position as a County Court Judge and entered Parliament, where he became closely associated with Lloyd George.

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appointed County Court Judge of the Mid-Wales Circuit, which comprised the towns along the coast of Cardigan Bay. In the light of subsequent years that first association of theirs has a special significance, and the personal following reminiscence furnished by Sir Brynmor Jones has a special interest:

“It was in June, 1885, that I was appointed judge of the Mid-Wales County Court Circuit. I started my work at once, and in due course held a court at Portmadoc. On my first visit there I tried a few defended cases in which solicitors were engaged. In one there appeared a particularly boyish-looking advocate, thin and rather pale. I was attracted by his youthful appearance and his taking voice, as well as by a certain earnest, eager, but yet restrained manner, and remember noticing as the hearing proceeded that his way of handling his case was in strong contrast with the inexperience which might be presumed from his youthfulness. A point of law arose, he was ready with his authorities, he asked no dangerous questions in cross-examination; he stuck to relevant points; he made no attempt at eloquence in his speech. I gave judgment for his client on quite sound but rather technical grounds, and recollect the humourous look (I see the papers call it now the “merry twinkle”) in his eye when he asked for costs and got them.

“As I did not then know the solicitors in that part of Wales, the Deputy Registrar used to tell me their names, but I had not caught the name of the young advocate and had left a blank in my notes.

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When the case was over I said to the Deputy Registrar: 'What's the name of that young fellow?' He replied, 'David Lloyd George—only just admitted.' I said, 'Well, he did that case uncommonly well. He'll get on.' "

IV

FIRST STEPS TOWARDS PARLIAMENT

CHAPTER IV

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AMONG the most active and zealous politicians in the Principality during the latter half of the nineteenth century was Michael Jones of Bala. From the pastorate of a Welsh Congregational church in Carmarthenshire, he had succeeded to the Principalship of the denominational college at Bala, where young men were trained for the Congregational ministry. His zeal, however, both as preacher and as theologian, was entirely subordinated to that of land reform. The nationalisation of the land was his cherished ideal for the removal of the social and economic evils of his day, and he traversed the Principality in unwearied service in its advocacy. To him no effort or sacrifice was too great if only he could succeed in quickening the interest of his countrymen in the question and in securing their adherence to its cause.

The staid politicians regarded him as an agitator whose zeal was equalled only by his utter impracticability. But he believed in his mission, and he supplemented his platform propaganda with costly sacrifices on his own part.

It is not surprising that Michael Jones should have been quick to discern a kindred spirit in Michael

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Davitt, the agrarian leader in Ireland. To the one, as to the other, the land question represented the tap-root of all economic and political grievances, and the one believed as intensely as did the other that not until the land problem was made the main basis of remedial legislation would the welfare of the peasantry be secured or the economic interests of the democracy be made sound.

Linked together as the two men were by an identity of views and by joint action in a common cause, Michael Jones invited Davitt to come and address a Welsh meeting. Davitt readily accepted the invitation, and it was decided to hold the meeting at Blaenau Festiniog, where the quarrymen were known to hold advanced views upon the land question. It is not too much to say that at that time there would have been found in Wales no politician of repute other than Michael Jones who would be bold enough to invite the Irish agitator to a Welsh political platform.

At the close of Davitt's address Michael Jones, who was in the chair, turned round to Lloyd George, who was seated near him on the platform, and requested him to move a vote of thanks to the Irishman. At once he rose and delivered a speech which completely captivated the audience with its scintillations of wit, and the passion of its appeal.

"I confess," he observed at the outset, "that when I look at the two Michaels on the platform I am reminded of the fight that the Archangel Michael had with Satan. Though that Michael, being single-handed, was unable to dispose of Old Nick, I trust

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that two Michaels will be able to bring the cause of the farmers and the workingmen to a successful issue."

According to Dr. R. D. Evans,¹ who was present at that meeting, "the audience was absolutely spell-bound under the sway of Lloyd George's masterly speech. Both he and Michael Jones spent the night under my roof, and Michael Davitt accompanied them to supper. I can well remember the scene as they sat around the table. Both Michael Jones and Michael Davitt were profuse in their congratulations to Lloyd George on so brilliant a speech. Davitt strongly urged him to go on in for politics, and I distinctly recall how he put his hand on Lloyd George's shoulder as in the tenderest of tones he added: 'There is a future for you, my boy.' Some six or seven years later I happened to be dining with Mr. Lloyd George at the House of Commons, when Michael Davitt approached our table. Just as Lloyd George was on the point of introducing me to him, Davitt exclaimed as he took me by the hand: 'There is no need for you to introduce me to Dr. Evans; it was at his house, my boy, that I prophesied what you would become,' and then turning round to me he added, 'But he has done even better than that, has he not, Doctor?' "

Lloyd George has always been ready to confess that Michael Davitt's advice to him on that occasion at Festiniog had a great effect upon him. It helped him to realise that his secretly cherished project of a Parliamentary career was much nearer his grasp than he had hitherto dared to hope.

¹ Specially contributed to this volume.

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Six months later, with the advent of the General Election, he was eager to take his chance, and so transmute into accomplished fact that strong impulse in the direction of St. Stephen's which Davitt's words had quickened within him. He saw a strategic opportunity in the situation created in the County of Merioneth by the secession of its Member from the ranks of Liberalism as the result of the introduction of Mr. Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill. The constituency was in every way a most desirable one for any politician of advanced views.

When the Merionethshire Liberal Association met for the purpose of selecting its candidate, Lloyd George's name was submitted by a medical man from Harlech.

"Who is he?" inquired one of the delegates from the southern portion of the county. "We have not so much as heard of him in our district."

"Possibly not," was the immediate reply, "but the time will come when not only you but the whole country will have heard of him. He is the coming man in Wales."

Lloyd George, however, had gathered at Corwen and in other districts in the county that popular feeling was crystallising in favour of Tom Ellis, whom he had already met at a temperance conference at Festiniog, and in whom he had instinctively discerned a patriot and a politician of the first order. This consideration, together with the fact that Tom Ellis was a native of Merionethshire, made a ready appeal to Lloyd George, and so, without a moment's hesitation, he decided to withdraw his name in favour of

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Ellis, in a confident anticipation that the triumph of the tenant farmer's son would materially help to hasten his own opportunity.

Frustrated by the force of circumstances in his first essay to secure selection as a Parliamentary candidate, Lloyd George directed his energies to the task of furthering the interests of a land campaign in Wales on the lines advocated by Michael Davitt at the meeting held at Festiniog. A movement was on foot among the farmers of South Carnarvonshire with a view of establishing a Farmers' Union for the purpose of demanding abatements in rents and more favourable terms in tenancies. Lloyd George got into touch with the men who were organising the new movement, and he assured them that, though he was "not a farmer," his sympathies were entirely with them, and he was ready to give them all the assistance in his power. His offer was readily and gratefully accepted, and he attended the meeting at Pwllheli at which the new Union was formally constituted, and supplemented his presence with a stirring speech which evoked great enthusiasm. He welcomed this movement on the part of the farmers as an encouraging symptom of the spirit which was taking possession of the Welsh peasantry, for he saw that in other parts of Wales, as in Carnarvonshire, forces were being liberated which could not fail to affect the highest interests of Wales.

The year 1888 proved a memorable year for the young attorney. On the pivot of its events hinged his subsequent destiny. The year opened auspiciously for him with his marriage, on January 24th,

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to Miss Maggie Owen, the only daughter of Mr. Richard Owen, a prosperous farmer in the neighbourhood of Criccieth. Her father was invariably described as "sure-footed"—essentially cautious in speech and in deed—while her mother was held in general esteem as a woman of sterling piety.

The association of the bride and bridegroom dated back to the days of their childhood, when, as Mrs. Lloyd George has been heard to say, she used to be taken by her parents, Sunday after Sunday, to the Calvinistic Methodist Chapel at Criccieth when they regularly encountered on these Sabbath day pilgrimages, Rebecca Lloyd and her grand-children as they were making their way in the opposite direction to the Baptist Chapel. She still recalls, as she confesses, the memory of the little lad, attired in knickerbockers and scarlet stockings, who, time and again, gave her the "glad eye" as they passed each other on the main road.

The interest, thus early begotten, developed with the increasing years, with the result that, before they had even emerged from their state of adolescence, David Lloyd and Maggie Owen had in the parlance of the village been seen "taking walks together." In order to ensure necessary safety in such surreptitious attentions, the lad would resort to the device of quietly hiding his uncle's boots at the close of the day and thus obviate the risk of his uncle sauntering out of doors at eventide.

With his advent to the state of manhood, Lloyd George pursued his attentions to the lassie, with still greater zest. There were, however, diffi-

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culties in the way. In their natural eagerness to keep on their hearth their only child, the parents openly looked askance upon the advances of any suitor, while the lassie herself showed an increasing coyness with increasing years. Happily, the claims of the young suitor were zealously reinforced by friends who were quick to mark the desirability of such a union. Among them was an aunt of the maiden who strongly urged her to stand steadfast in her choice even in face of her parents' opposition. "Mark you," was her emphatic observation, "that young man has a great future, so you stick to him at all costs." She did "stick" to him, with the result that love finally triumphed over all obstacles, and the courtship found its consummation in the happy event which took place at the Methodist Chapel in the little village of Pencaenlwydd, in one of the most secluded spots in Carnarvonshire. Accompanied by his uncle, the young bridegroom travelled by train from Criccieth to Chwillog whence they walked the distance of three miles to the Chapel where the marriage ceremony was to take place.

"Mr. George, who is well-known in this part of the country," declared a local journal in its report of the marriage, "is very popular and the families of both the young people are held in high esteem. Early in the day flags were to be seen in all directions, and there was a considerable display of bunting. The town was illuminated at night and fireworks were let off." Unfortunately, as the Methodist minister, who had officiated at the wedding ceremony subsequently wrote to the happy bridegroom, "a drizzling fog

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spoiled the bonfire and the fireworks," but he supplanted that dismal bit of information with the gratifying intimation that "several handsome presents have already been brought for you, and I should think from all I hear that you will require a special room for them all."

In a retrospective survey of a career, which has been marked by innumerable achievements, it is very manifest that there has not been one factor which has so perceptibly advanced his interests as that event which took place on that January morning in 1888 when he was joined in holy matrimony to the farmer's daughter who had long captivated the community by her innate charm and transcendent goodness. With every step in his advancement along the precipitous path that ultimately led him to the highest summit in the service of the State, he has ever found her at his side "as an hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest." She has been the pride, no less than the pivot, of his hearth—a model wife and an ideal mother. Amid the dizzy heights of fame, to which she has accompanied her illustrious consort, she has preserved unsullied the simplicity of her heart and the bloom of her earliest loyalties. It is interesting to recall that a quarter of a century after his marriage, Lloyd George declared, on the occasion of the presentation, by the Welsh community in London, of his own portrait to his wife:—

"I appreciate very deeply the great kindness which moves my friends to present to the brave little woman, who is my wife, this portrait of the troublesome person whom she has stood by through good and

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evil report. I cannot say that in public—it would bring me down. I cannot say less without doing her injustice.”

Mrs. Lloyd George has been heard to say that when she and her husband set forth on their honeymoon on January 24th, 1888, and discussed their plans for the future, the question of a Parliamentary career was not even mooted as being within the ambit of his cherished purposes.

Solely dependent upon his profession for his income, as he then was, he was constrained by sheer force of circumstances to realise that he was not in a position to sustain the responsibilities of a home and at the same time to indulge his ambition for a Parliamentary career, involving, as it would, heavy financial expenditure and constant absence from his office. For him, therefore, as he clearly discerned, there was no course open other than to cleave to his profession with the utmost assiduity.

The calligraphy of human purposes, however, is not infrequently erased by the moving finger of Destiny, as Lloyd George soon discovered. “I dare say,” he has confessed, “I should have remained many years longer a country solicitor if my name had not been brought into some public notice by what is known as the ‘Llanfrothen Burial Case.’ It was one of those peculiar harsh cases which excite passion and attract public attention.”

The attendant circumstances of the case may be briefly narrated. In the month of April, 1888, a quarryman of the name of Robert Roberts died in the village of Llanfrothen. Shortly before his death

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the quarryman had expressed a wish to be buried in the new burial ground attached to the old churchyard, close to the remains of a daughter of his already buried therein; and in accordance with the provisions of the Burial's Act passed in the year 1880, which empowered Nonconformist ministers to officiate at the grave of any member of their congregation, even though interred within the churchyard, an application for a grave was made to the Rector in the usual way and it was duly granted. On the following day the brother of the deceased man took to the rectory the formal notice, required by the Act, that the services of the Rector would not be required at the interment. The Rector resented being served with such a notice, and he refused to accept it. At the Rector's command the sexton proceeded to close the grave and to lock the gate at the entrance to the churchyard. The gravedigger afterwards informed the Rector that the relatives of the dead man had requested him to prepare the grave afresh, and he urged that, being a public servant, he could not very well refuse to do so. To this the Rector replied that he was quite willing that the body should be buried in the churchyard, but he claimed the right of deciding where in the churchyard the body should be committed to the dust, "and he chose as the spot for the last resting ground of the poor quarryman"—to quote Lloyd George's own statement—"not the place which he asked, beside his daughter's grave, but a spot, bleak and sinister, in which were buried the bodies of the unknown drowned that were washed up from the sea in this region of shipwrecks, or of

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suicides, or of the few Jews that died in the district." The Rector further informed the gravedigger that if the grave desired by the relatives were reopened, the person responsible for the reopening would have "to take the consequences." In their extremity the friends of the deceased man sought advice, and the Rev. T. E. Roberts, the minister of the deceased man, made a special journey to Portmadoc to consult Lloyd George on the matter. On the strength of the facts, as placed before him, the young solicitor, with characteristic boldness, at once advised that the original grave should be opened afresh, and that on the day of the funeral the gates of the churchyard should be forced open for the cortège. The advice was acted upon. The grave was reopened, and a bier procured from Ramoth Chapel, which was about a mile and a half distant from the house of the deceased. Two or three men proceeded to the churchyard in advance of the funeral, and when they found the gate locked they burst it open with an iron bar. They were followed by the mourners and a great concourse of people.

With characteristic foresight Lloyd George had taken precautions to have the case tried by a jury rather than by the County Court Judge alone, and the ultimate issue carried with it a complete vindication of his action. "I am not going to appeal to prejudice," he declared, as he opened the case for the defence, "but I shall deal with the case as one of ordinary trespass. The matter at issue is really narrowed down to a question of title—was the new ground attached to the churchyard part and

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parcel of the parish churchyard, or does it belong to the Trustees under the terms of the deed now produced? If you, as a jury, find that it is part and parcel of the churchyard, then the new Burials Act will apply, and there is an end of the matter, notwithstanding any condition which might be in the deed."

By force of argument and by weight of evidence he proved his case to the satisfaction of the jury, who found, as he had contended, that there was a verbal gift in 1864, though not by deed, of the addition to the old churchyard, that it was actually occupied by the Rector and parishioners ever since, and that a wall was erected in 1869 enclosing the ground. Fortunately, as later developments proved, the foreman of the jury took the precaution of committing to paper the exact findings of the jury, so that there should be no possible misapprehension of their verdict. Notwithstanding this verdict, the Judge reserved judgment on the ground that the case was one "of very great importance," and that there still remained "questions of law to be decided." The deferred judgment was not delivered until two months later. The judge was not satisfied with setting aside the verdict of the jury, but must needs display his own personal bias in the matter. "I cannot help saying," he declared in the most oracular fashion, "that it is to be deplored that the defendants did not, if they wished to try their rights, resort to the proper tribunal and have the question fairly and dispassionately tried, but that they should have taken such very strong, violent, and, in my opinion,

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ill-judged and illegal modes of bringing such a question to an issue. The courts are open to all, and it is never desirable that persons should take the law into their own hands. I must, therefore, show my disapproval of the course the defendants adopted and enter a verdict for the plaintiffs for five guineas with costs on the higher scale."

The Judge soon discovered that in Lloyd George he had a lawyer of much too tough a fibre to be cast down, for no sooner had judgment been thus given than the young lawyer rose to his feet and in the quietest of tones asked for leave to appeal, which the Judge granted, together with leave to obtain a copy of his notes. Not satisfied with that, Lloyd George further sought of the Judge to amend his note of the findings, of the jury. When the Judge demurred to his request on the ground that Mr. Lloyd George could not go behind the notes, the latter very boldly retorted that "the Judge's notes should be as correct as possible in view of the fact that the appeal will be based upon them." To that statement the Judge snappishly replied that he would not correct anything of what had taken place at the first court. It was in vain that the young advocate pointed out that he had taken advantage of the first available time. The Judge stubbornly declined to amend.

In due course the appeal against the judgment in the County Court came before Lord Chief Justice Coleridge and Mr. Justice Manisty in the Divisional Court. In view of the importance of the issues to Nonconformists in general, the Deputies of the Pro-

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testant Dissenters—an organisation consisting of representatives of the leading Nonconformist bodies, with its headquarters in London—decided to cover the cost of briefing Counsel. The Divisional Court swept aside the irrelevances that had been allowed to obscure the main issue in the County Court. "It is manifest," declared the Lord Chief Justice, "that the governing question in the case is this: Had Mrs. Owen, in 1881, a right to execute the conveyance of that date? Moreover," he added, "it is important to see what was the true finding of the jury. I have read the discussion at the end of the case when Mr. George tendered to the learned Judge a paper to correct the Judge's note. The jury had, I understand, written down upon that note their exact findings. I suppose that paper is not here."

Fortunately, Lloyd George had taken good care that this document should not be missing, and immediately "the identical scrap"—as he afterwards described it in appreciation of its value in the case—was produced.

"It says," declared the Lord Chief Justice, after scanning its contents as written by the foreman of the jury, "'We all agree that there was a verbal gift in 1864 of the addition to the old churchyard which was actually occupied by the Rector and *parishioners* ever since,' and yet," exclaimed the Lord Chief Justice in unfeigned astonishment, "the learned Judge refused to correct his note by the paper written down at the time by the jury. The learned County Court Judge says, according to the shorthand notes, 'I will not alter my notes for anything.' It is high time

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that should be set right," he observed in an angry tone; "these proceedings shall go to the proper superior of the County Court Judge. It is enough to say that I have no authority over him, but," he added with significant nod of the head, "the Lord Chancellor has."

In giving judgment on appeal, the Lord Chief Justice, turning to the counsel who appeared for the Rector, said: "Presume everything—the gift and the acceptance in 1864. There is no evidence that Mrs. Owen was ever in possession after that. The jury have found that Mrs. Owen has been out of possession since 1864. Every circumstance of the case shows that she has. The jury were perfectly right in finding that she has, and if she has, there is an end to the plaintiffs' claim."

The judgment of the County Court was thus reversed, and costs in both courts were granted to Lloyd George's clients.

This dispute became memorable in the annals of Welsh life, and, as Lloyd George subsequently observed, by the time it had come to an end his name had become known throughout Wales.

V

FROM COUNTY COUNCIL TO
PARLIAMENT

CHAPTER V

FROM COUNTY COUNCIL TO PARLIAMENT

ALTHOUGH the project of a Parliamentary career had not figured among Lloyd George's declared purposes when his young bride linked her name and interests to his in the early part of the year 1888, the trend of events was quietly making straight his path in the direction of St. Stephen's. As far back as the year in which he qualified as a solicitor, there had been a growing expectation among the people of South Carnarvon that so brilliant a politician was destined to find his way to the House of Commons. At the close of a telling speech which he delivered in one of the villages in Carnarvonshire in October, 1885, the local Nonconformist minister, in proposing a vote of thanks to him for [his speech, predicted, amidst the assenting applause of the audience, that he would make in time "another Chamberlain," while one of the leading] divines in the Principality, after hearing him speak at a public meeting in Portmadoc, singled him out as "a future Member of Parliament."

Mrs. Lloyd George has a very vivid recollection of an incident which occurred within a few weeks of their settlement in their own home at Criccieth, and which clearly revealed the intensity of her husband's

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political inclinations. A Church-defence meeting had been advertised to take place at Portmadoc, and several leading ecclesiastical dignitaries were announced to take part in the proceedings. The announcement of such a gathering roused Lloyd George's antipathy, and he made up his mind to carry the war right into the enemy's camp. Unfortunately, the appointed day of the meeting found him confined indoors with a severe cold in the throat, and all day long he bemoaned the hardness of his luck in thus finding himself incapacitated for carrying out the plan which he had devised. Towards evening, however, he decided, in spite of the imperiousness of the doctor's advice and of the entreaties of his wife, to make the journey to Portmadoc for the purpose of challenging the vote of the meeting; and, muffling up his throat, he set out.

After listening patiently to the various speakers, he ascended the platform and claimed the right to move an amendment. This he proceeded to do in words that flashed with fire. He subjected the previous speakers to a ruthless castigation, and he roused the enthusiasm of the main portion of the meeting to such a pitch that the amendment was carried by a large majority. An hour or two later he was back in his home at Criccieth, in high glee over the triumph of his exploit. The huskiness in his voice had completely disappeared, and he confessed to his wife that in the excitement of the meeting all trace of his cold had vanished. For several days afterwards his great triumph formed the staple topic of local talk. He was the hero of the occasion; and the feeling deepened

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that so daring a fighter was bound to find his way to the House of Commons.

Just at this time the Liberals of the Carnarvon Boroughs were beginning to take the necessary steps in the choice of a Parliamentary candidate. The constituency consisted of six separate towns, the chief of which were Carnarvon and Bangor. In the annals of Welsh history no town has filled so large and important a place as the town of Carnarvon. As far back as the period of the Roman occupation of Britain it was the chief centre of the Cymric community; while in the more turbulent times of the invasion of Wales by the Normans the town and district of Carnarvon offered the most vigorous and unyielding resistance to the ruthless campaigns of the Norman forces in their fierce efforts to disintegrate the independence of Wales and to encompass its subjection to Norman rule. Carnarvon thus epitomises the history and the vicissitudes of the Welsh nation for well-nigh two thousand years.

Welsh is the language of the mart as well as of the sanctuary, while the streets are vibrant with the pure idiomatic expressions of the children as they revel in their play. It is this combination of historic renown and of Cymric patriotism that has invested Carnarvon with a prestige to which no other town in Wales can lay claim. Therein lies the reason why it was chosen as the venue of that historic ceremony in the year 1911, when the young Prince of Wales was formally invested with the insignia of his titular position amid a display of pageantry such as had never been previously witnessed on Welsh soil.

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Over against this town of Carnarvon, there stands within the setting of the constituency, the cathedral city of Bangor, with its array of forces and influences that are absolutely at variance with such as predominate within the precincts of Carnarvon. Anglicanism rather than Nonconformity is in the ascendancy while English is the general medium of intercourse amongst its inhabitants. The constituency was thus subject to the unceasing struggle of two opposing tides, each ever contending against the other for supremacy. At the General Election of 1886, the spoils of victory had fallen to Bangor, and Carnarvon, restive under its defeat, could only wait until the opportunity came for the renewal of its traditional struggle with the forces entrenched under the shadow of the Cathedral.

"You require a candidate for the Carnarvon Boroughs," wrote an eminent Welsh divine to the Rev. Herber Evans, who was the pastor of one of the leading Nonconformist churches in the town of Carnarvon; "you have him ready at hand in Mr. Lloyd George. Give him his chance. He is destined to become the leader of Wales in the House of Commons." The high estimate which leading Welshmen had already formed of the young lawyer began to spread through the constituency. In the issue of the local journal, immediately following that in which a candidate's necessary qualifications had been minutely set out, there appeared in bold type the statement that "in political circles in Carnarvonshire no little stir has been made by the announcement that Mr. Lloyd George is being spoken of as the

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probable candidate for these Boroughs. We are disposed to treat the report of the selection as premature," declared the editor, "although we should only be too happy to verify it, recognising in Mr. Lloyd George an able politician, one conversant with the wants of Wales, with the needs and aspirations of his countrymen, and one who, there is no doubt, would prove an admirable aid in Parliament to the Member for Merionethshire."

In spite of the editorial doubt, the announcement proved to be well grounded. The rank and file in certain districts in the Boroughs had caught the contagion of their leaders' enthusiasm for so brilliant a politician, and the feeling deepened that in Lloyd George the constituency would find as great an asset for the national interests as the neighbouring county of Merioneth had realised in Tom Ellis.

Early in the year 1889 the delegates from the constituent districts met, and Lloyd George was adopted with absolute unanimity amid the greatest enthusiasm.

In accepting the invitation he openly ranged himself with Tom Ellis in declaring himself to be "a Welsh Nationalist first and a Liberal afterwards." Like Ellis, he made the demand for legislative autonomy for Wales the chief plank in his platform.

The year 1889 gave Lloyd George a unique opportunity for political propagandism. The Local Government Act, which had been placed upon the Statute Book in the previous year, was coming into operation; and in Wales, even more so than in England, the necessary preparations for the first elec-

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tions to the newly created County Councils were being made with the keenest eagerness.

Lloyd George caught the glow of Ellis's instinctive belief in the wealth of possibility, in the direction of Welsh autonomy, that lay below the surface of the new Act, and he readily associated himself with the policy of waging the contest for seats on these new Councils on strictly political lines. From four separate districts in the county of Carnarvon there was proffered to him a pressing invitation to become a candidate, but he declined all such overtures on the ground that he was anxious to hold himself free to render service in all districts where his help was most required. He traversed the county in his campaign, and wherever he went he made the political interests of Wales, as affected by the new Act, the basis of his speeches.

"Is it not a fact," he was asked at one of these meetings, "that Lord Rosebery has urged that all County Council elections should be fought on non-political lines?"

"I am not responsible for Lord Rosebery's suggestion," retorted Lloyd George; "and, moreover, Lord Rosebery has never been in Wales, and he knows nothing of the special needs of Wales."

"Lord Rosebery was in Wales in 1878," exclaimed the interrupter.

"Ah," was the instant reply, "Wales has greatly changed since then; and don't forget that Wales is quite different from London."

The policy of waging the County Council contests on strictly political lines, as advocated by Tom

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Ellis and by Lloyd George, was fully vindicated at the polls throughout Wales, for in every one of the Welsh counties an overwhelming majority of Liberal Councillors was secured. The territorial magnates, who had been accustomed to administer the affairs of their respective counties, were ruthlessly swept aside in favour of men who had hitherto been unknown outside the confines of their own immediate localities.

When the newly elected members of the Carnarvonshire County Council met for their first meeting, they could not forget their indebtedness to Lloyd George for so triumphant an appeal, and they readily set themselves to liquidate their obligations by electing him as one of their aldermen. He thus became the youngest alderman in the whole of Wales, a fact which led the late Mr. Raikes, M.P.—afterwards Postmaster-General in Lord Salisbury's Ministry—to dub him "the boy alderman."

From the outset "the boy alderman" refused to regard the County Council as a mere parochial institution created for the primary purpose of attending to the needs of roads and bridges within the county. He saw in these newly formed Councils the framework of miniature parliaments, and he was determined to save them from the peril of mere parochialism. "Wales," he declared at one of the Council meetings, "expects a great deal from its County Councils, and the country at large will be greatly disappointed if these Councils do not accomplish something far beyond the mere duties prescribed by the Local Government Board."

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He applied himself to the task of transmuting into practice the force of his dictum, and at successive meetings he submitted resolutions which went far beyond the prescribed confines of County Council interests. For example, at one of the early meetings of the Council he moved a resolution in favor of forming a County Council Association for the whole of Wales, with a proviso that each of the Welsh County Councils should be invited to appoint three members for the purpose of taking joint action in the establishment of a body which should provide the embryonic stage of a Welsh legislature for the establishment of such an Association.

Thus from the very outset he set himself the task of relating the proceedings of the County Council to issues much more momentous and vital to the Welsh people than the humdrum administration of strictly local needs. It is not surprising to find that as often as Lloyd George submitted one of his far-reaching motions, the Conservative minority on the Council invariably protested on the ground that these resolutions were altogether beyond the prescribed scope and function of a purely administrative body like the County Council. "Mr. Lloyd George," declared their spokesman on one occasion, "is constantly goading this Council to interfere in matters that belong exclusively to the higher domain of Parliament."

Earlier than was anticipated, and in a manner altogether unexpected, Lloyd George's opportunity came. In the month of March in the year 1890 there came the unexpected news of the death of Mr.

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Swetenham, the Conservative member for the Carnarvon Boroughs. At once the opposing parties in the Boroughs prepared for the struggle for the vacancy, and Lloyd George was formally adopted by the local Liberal associations as their candidate.

At the outset the advantage seemed to lie with the Liberals. They were ready with their candidate, while their opponents, on the other hand, were in a quandary. They had sought Mr. Ellis Nanney, the most powerful and popular figure in the Carnarvonshire squirearchy, to champion their cause, but he had turned a deaf ear to the overtures. In their extremity there was proffered to them the candidature of a Welsh barrister in South Wales who had seceded from the Liberal party on the question of Home Rule. The local leaders of the Conservative party were about to close with the offer, when strong representations were made to them that the adoption of one who was so perceptibly devoid of local associations would mean the certain loss of the seat. As a result, the candidature of the stranger was cancelled, and the greatest pressure was again brought to bear upon Mr. Ellis Nanney. Great, therefore, was the jubilation of the Conservatives when it was known that the popular squire of Llanystumdwy had at last yielded to their entreaties, and equally significant was the ready acknowledgment of the local Liberals that they were confronted with the strongest man whom their opponents could possibly pit against them.

The contest thus became a grim and dramatic struggle between the Squire and the village lad who had instigated the memorable "Revolt" against the

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"Creed" in the village school, in the Squire's own presence.

Lloyd George's election address was hailed as one that ought to satisfy the aspirations of the most extreme men in the party without giving the slightest offence to the moderate and steady-going adherents of traditional Liberalism. On the basis of his address the candidate was fittingly described as having a complete grasp of the most difficult problems of the day, worthy to be compared with the full knowledge possessed by practical and experienced statesmen.

It is not too much to claim that never had any Welsh aspirant for Parliamentary honours issued an address so comprehensive in its scope, or, so alluring in its prospects of legislation as that which the young lawyer issued on this occasion. It broke up ground that had long lain fallow. And yet, scarcely had he embarked upon his candidature, than the most sinister attempts were made to stir up prejudice. Objection was raised against him on the ground of his youth and inexperience. So skilfully and persistently was this consideration urged that its echoes were to be heard, according to one of the Press correspondents, even in the native jargon of the streets: "*Rhyw hogia fel yna yn sythu eu hunain.*" ("Some youngsters like these who fancy themselves.") In view of the fact that there is no sphere where wisdom is more generally accepted as the special characteristic of advanced age than in a Welsh community, there was real ground for apprehension lest the objection might strike root in a favourable soil. For

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that reason one of Lloyd George's staunchest supporters deemed it necessary to make a spirited protest in the columns of the Press against so unfair and so purely traditional a misgiving. "I think that it is high time," he wrote, "that this prejudice against young men taking positions of responsibility should be rooted out. It is not a matter of wonder that old men should be appointed judges and bishops, because these offices are fat geese which are given away as rewards for long services or as family favours. But why, in the name of common sense, should the people of Wales, who have so many grievances to be set right, choose to be represented by worn-out, dull, stiff, old fogies who have not a stroke of enthusiasm left in them, and whose minds are utterly closed to new ideas? If there is any place in the world where there is need of catlike vigilance and unceasing activity it is the British House of Commons. I confidently believe that Lloyd George, if elected Member for these Boroughs (as I believe he will be), will prove an excellent representative and a fit comrade for Tom Ellis. He is active and full of enthusiasm, and has a quick eye to the interests of Wales."

The campaign had scarcely begun before there appeared in the constituency the chief Conservative Agent for Wales. He came for the avowed purpose of ascertaining "the lie of the land." He interviewed canvassers and pressmen and he entered into conversation with the best informed of the local men. With the evening's post he dispatched to the Conservative headquarters in London the result of his

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investigations on which he confidently reported that dissension had already crept into the Liberal ranks, that denominational bias was in an active state of fermentation, and that the defection of a large number of Nonconformists from the Liberal standard was assured. On the strength of these facts he predicted a sure and a substantial victory for the Conservative candidate. Having dispatched his message, the official envoy wended his way to the pavilion at Carnarvon, where Lloyd George was advertised to speak that evening. The place was crowded, and in due time the youthful candidate made his appearance. The emissary, eager to spy the nakedness of the land, marked with serene satisfaction the presence of a large neutral zone in the meeting where the advent of the candidate had evoked no semblance of enthusiasm. Lloyd George devoted his speech to the advocacy of the measures adumbrated in his election address, and the audience was listening with content when suddenly the orator's voice quivered with the note of emotion. "I once heard a man wildly declaiming against Tom Ellis as a Parliamentary representative," he proceeded to say, amid the hush that fell upon the great assembly, "for according to that man Mr. Ellis's disqualification consisted mainly in the fact that he had been brought up in 'a cottage.' The Tories have not yet realised," he continued, as his voice rang through the building like the clear note of a great bell, "that the day of the cottage-bred men has at last dawned."

The exclamation, so vivid in its representation and so thrilling in its implication, revealed to the audi-

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ence as in a flash the dramatic contrast between Lloyd George and the territorial magnate who was his opponent. Instantly the audience sprang frantically to its feet, and the rafters of the hall reverberated again and again as men shouted themselves hoarse and waved their hats in the fervour of their ecstasies. Amid this remarkable demonstration, the envoy hurried forth into the street. As soon as he reached his hotel he penned a fresh message to the party headquarters. "I much regret," he wrote, "that I find myself compelled to reverse my previous opinion of the prospects of the contest. I attended Lloyd George's meeting at Carnarvon this evening, and under the sway of his marvellous oratorical powers the audience was electrified beyond anything I have ever witnessed in the whole course of my life. Strong men broke down with emotion, while those who have hitherto been neutral and even indifferent were swept off their feet with the whirlwind of his eloquence. A man who can make so thrilling and overpowering an appeal to the emotions is absolutely invincible in Wales, and for that reason I feel compelled to warn you that in my opinion the seat is lost to our party."

The election took place on April 10th, and the result was declared on the following day. The first count gave the Squire a slight majority, and Lloyd George, in spite of his deep sense of disappointment, was about to tender his congratulations to his opponent, who was already elated with joy, when one of his strongest supporters urged on him the necessity of a second count. This was duly demanded and secured.

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In the second count every voting paper was scrutinised with the greatest care, with the result that it was discovered that a bundle of voting papers recorded in Lloyd George's favour had, amid the flurry of the first count, been placed among the voting papers of his opponent, and had consequently been credited to him. The revised figures gave the following result:

D. Lloyd George.....	1,963
H. Ellis Nanney.....	1,945

The cottage-bred lad had secured the seat by the narrow majority of eighteen votes. But it sufficed.

"The banner of the Red Dragon has been borne aloft in triumph," he exclaimed, as the great crowd surged around him in the unrestrained ecstasy of its jubilation. On paper the majority seemed so infinitesimal that the *Times*, in its issue of the following day, emphasised the fact that, if only ten voters in the constituency had been persuaded to cast their votes differently the seat would have been saved for the Conservative party; but only those who knew how fiercely the struggle had been fought could realise how great a triumph that narrow majority of eighteen votes really represented.

With his inborn predilection for dramatic situations, Lloyd George chose the day set apart for the introduction of the Budget as the occasion of his formal introduction to the House, little dreaming of that vital relationship to Budget Day which the future held in store for him.

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“Mr. Lloyd George,” wrote a Parliamentary correspondent, from the eminence of the Press Gallery, as he diverted his attention from Mr. Goschen, who, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, was the hero of the occasion, to glance at the slender figure of the newly-elected Member for the Carnarvon Borough as he walked up the floor of the House to take the oath and his seat, “is a young man, pale and stooping, and of a lounging gait.”

But to none had been given “the seeing eye” to discern in the youthful comer the embryonic form of a future Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was destined in later years to introduce one of the most epoch-making Budgets in the annals of British politics.

VI

THE CLAIMS OF WALES. EARLY
POLITICAL EXPERIENCES

CHAPTER VI

THE CLAIMS OF WALES. EARLY POLITICAL EXPERIENCES

THE road to Parliament is never strewn with roses, and he who assays it must be prepared for "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

Lloyd George had not reached his goal as the representative in Parliament of his own people without suffering severely from the arrows of his opponents.

In course of the contest, the electors had been reminded that he was poor, and so lacked that abundance of wealth which, from time immemorial, popular sentiment had come to regard as the first essential in a Parliamentary candidate. So far from apologising for his poverty, Lloyd George had gloried in it, for he perceived that his candidature, under such circumstances, could not fail to bring home to the popular mind the deep and dramatic changes which were then being wrought in the political life of Wales.

"I am not the son of a nobleman, nor am I expecting to be supported by means of money," he declared in the course of one of his speeches, "but as one of the democracy I ask the democracy to give me help that I may speak for them. . . . I recall how a character in one of Charles Kingsley's books makes this remark to his son: 'Money, my son, will do anything'; but, unless I am very much mistaken, mere

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money can never corrupt the manhood of Arfon. Silver and gold have I none," he exclaimed in his challenge to the serried ranks of wealth and of social prestige that were so heavily arrayed against him, "but such as I have in the way of energy and zeal for the welfare of the masses that will I readily give to my little country."

By dint of stern economy and, still more, as the result of unstinted sacrifices and of gratuitous services on the part of a great body of his political associates and supporters, Lloyd George had been able to reduce his election expenses to a level far below any previous minimum in the history of the constituency, and to less than half the amount spent in that contest by his opponent. Relatively small as was the total, it was a formidable outlay for the new Member, who only six years previously had exhausted the financial resources of the humble village home in his heroic task of qualifying as a solicitor. It was no secret that the contest had drained the whole of the savings secured from unremitting toil and strenuous advocacy in the scattered police courts of a large rural district where fees were light and travelling expenses heavy.

Instinctively the Liberals in the Carnarvon Boroughs felt that they had secured in the young solicitor one who, in aspiration and vision, belonged to the same high order of leadership as Tom Ellis; and, after the sturdy example of the men of Merioneth, they, too, were ready to take upon themselves the financial burdens which threatened to impede their Member as he sought to traverse the upward path of his destiny. "We hope that Mr. Lloyd George," declared the

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leading Liberal organ in the constituency on the morrow of the contest, "will not take offence at a suggestion we feel it our duty as the mouthpiece of the official Liberal Party to make. It is that a fund be opened for defraying Mr. Lloyd George's election expenses. We know that Mr. Lloyd George never anticipated any movement of this kind, nor do we suggest it because we believe that Mr. Lloyd George would like to have his expenses paid. Our only reason for making the suggestion is that the electors of the Carnarvon Boroughs would have cause to expect more from their Member if they paid his election expenses. The total amount is small—something like £250—and it could be got together with very little effort." The suggestion was taken up and within the short space of forty-eight hours promises for more than two-thirds of the required amount had been received by the promoters of the fund.

The proposal, however, was instantly vetoed by Lloyd George, who firmly refused to accept any such token of the admiration and gratitude of his supporters. "While recognising the good wishes towards me of those friends who desire to inaugurate a special fund for defraying my election expenses," he wrote, "I prefer that no such steps as are suggested be taken, and I would urge that they would instead contribute towards the general fund of the Liberal cause, as, had my friends, unknown to me, raised the amount of my expenses among themselves, even then I should not have accepted their kindness except on the understanding that I should be allowed to hand the sum over

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to the general funds of the party for registration and other purposes."

His great triumph at the by-election secured for the new Member the compliment of a special invitation from the Liberation Society to speak at its annual May meeting in the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

Such an invitation readily appealed to him, for not only did it offer him the opportunity to address for the first time a purely English audience, but the venue of the meeting represented for him "holy ground" for, reared as he had been on a Baptist hearth, he had been taught to regard the Metropolitan Tabernacle, with its far-flung fame of Spurgeon's ministry, as the most famous shrine of the Baptist faith.

The importance of the engagement pressed heavily on him, and a fortnight before the date he wrote home, "I must devote my whole mind to preparing for the Tabernacle meeting"; while Mrs. Lloyd George confessed that for successive evenings as they walked along the secluded lanes of Acton, her husband would rehearse parts of the speech which he had so carefully prepared.

The meeting was held on May 7th, under the Chairmanship of Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who introduced Lloyd George to the audience as a "Young Brave who has the scalp of a Tory somewhere about him."

In spite of all the labour and diligence which he had lavished on the preparation of his speech, the youthful orator discovered to his chagrin that he was to be placed at great disadvantage.

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"I was stuck at the very end of the programme," he wrote on the morrow of the meeting, "after three or four weary and dreary speakers, and a collection had depleted the building of a considerable part of its audience and of all but one or two of the reporters." But, disconcerting as these conditions were, the resourcefulness of his oratory on that occasion, as on many subsequent occasions in his public career, came to his assistance and enabled him to snatch a triumph in the teeth of difficulties. "Not a man moved whilst I spoke," he wrote in a vein of justifiable pride, "they were all attention. The cheering and laughter which greeted my remarks drove me on from point to point, until, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour and my fixed determination not to speak for more than five or ten minutes, I must have occupied at least twenty-five minutes. What was strange was that when I sat down the audience seemed surprised."

"A great many years ago, before Nonconformity had improved the moral condition of the people," he declared in the concluding passage of his speech, "there used to be a set of men who lived on depredations on their neighbour's field, stealing away the farmer's sheep and obliterating the earmarks so as to destroy the chances of recovery by the rightful owner. That is just like the proselytism of the Church of England. Some Nonconformist sheep stray from their fold; they are decoyed into the Church of England, the earmarks are obliterated, their characters are so defaced and disfigured that you can hardly identify them. This is not proselytism. This is not con-

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version. It is simply a process of ecclesiastical sheep-stealing."

So scathing an attack upon the Welsh Church had the immediate effect of rousing the ire of its defenders to fever heat, with the result that the latest recruit to the ranks of the Welsh Parliamentary Party suddenly found himself the butt of a fierce assault. "Rarely indeed," declared the *Western Mail*, the leading Conservative organ in Wales, "has any Welsh Member of Parliament signalised his advent into political life in such a vigorous and, withal, in such a characteristic manner. The representatives of the Principality have, with good reason, been charged with lukewarmness and a want of sympathy with the aspirations of the Radical Nationalists of Wales. It is felt that Welshmen have dallied too long with fine phrases and polite platitudes, and so the demand to-day is for representatives who will reverse the old order of things. Radical Nationalism must not be too moderate, too polite, or too gentlemanly. Surely the man and the hour have come. We welcome Mr. Lloyd George as the living embodiment of the ideal representative of Welsh Radical Nationalism. After his speech at the Metropolitan Tabernacle no one will for a moment think of accusing him with being too moderate, too polite, or too gentlemanly."

Scarcely had Lloyd George emerged from the fusillade, than he found himself faced by the much more trying ordeal of being subjected to the criticism of a section of his own personal supporters. Early in the month of June, the Tithes Bill, introduced by the Conservative Government, entered upon its Committee

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stage, and at the outset an amendment was moved by a Mr. Stevenson—"that it be an instruction to the Committee that they have power to provide for the equitable revision of tithes in accordance with the altered condition of agriculture." Accompanied by only one of his Welsh colleagues, Lloyd George, with characteristic independence of spirit, boldly marched into the Government lobby in opposition to such an amendment. Naturally enough, this action was made the subject of a good deal of comment and criticism which was re-echoed in the editorial columns of one of the Liberal organs in his own constituency. The delinquents were reminded that "it is almost as bad to have too much conscience as it is to have no conscience at all. In the expressive phraseology of the great Republic of the West, citizens who are afflicted with a supersensitive political conscience are denominated Mugwumps, and their malady is called Mugwumpitude. The words are both clear and cacophonous, but they are quite as acceptable and pleasant as that which they signify, and, unless the epidemic soon subsides in this country, Welsh politicians will have to discuss not only the feasibility of log-rolling pledges, but also the desirability of fixing the limits of Mugwumpish conduct."

Lloyd George deemed it advisable to explain the considerations which had moved him to vote against the "Stevenson Instruction."

In this explanatory statement he took the opportunity of observing that, unless Members of Parliament were given some measure of independence, the constituencies might as well send cast-iron Members

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to the House of Commons or a regiment of Militia which would always be ready to move, at the command of the Chief Whip, to the right wheel. He claimed "liberty of judgment as an inalienable right," and he further declared that he would "refuse once and for all to make mere party the god of his idolatry." His firm, unbending attitude had the desired effect. The vituperation in the columns of the Welsh Press ceased; instinctively men felt that this new Member was made of sterner stuff than that of which the typical Welsh Member had hitherto been composed.

It is safe to say that no man has ever entered Parliament who has not felt haunted by the contemplation of his maiden speech. The spectre throws its forbidding shadow around him from the very first day on which he takes his seat. To outsiders such mental apprehension in regard to an event apparently so trivial must appear to be not merely uncalled for, but unintelligible; and there are those who wonder why it should be so much more difficult to speak on the floor of the House of Commons to an audience of barely a hundred men than from the platform of a crowded meeting or in a court of law where the gravest issues may be at stake. It is only they who have faced the experience who know what it means; and the fact remains that some of the most popular of orators at the hustings, and even some of the most famous among the masters of forensic eloquence, have utterly failed when they rose to address the House of Commons for the first time. "A more terrible audience there is not in the world," wrote Macaulay of the

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House of Commons seventy years back. "A place where Walpole succeeded and Addison failed; where Dundas succeeded and Burke failed; where Peel now succeeds and where Mackintosh failed; where Erskine and Scarlett were dinner-bells; where Lawrence and Jeckyll, the two wittiest men, or nearly so, of their time, were thought bores, is surely a very strange place." Equally sombre was Disraeli's description of the House of Commons as "the most chilling and nerve-destroying audience in the world."

It is true that in every new Parliament some of the more daring in the ranks of the new-comers, acting on the principle that the sooner an ordeal is faced the quicker will come the desired relief, have been known to snatch the first available opportunity for ridding themselves of the travail of their anxiety. William Cowper, for example, who subsequently attained to the eminence of the Woolsack, made as many as three speeches in the House on the day on which he first took his seat, while Daniel O'Connell delivered his maiden speech on his first evening in the House.

But these instances mark the exceptions to the general rule—a rule which Mr. Lloyd George deliberately set himself to observe. "My first division last night," he wrote to his uncle the day after he had taken his seat. "I voted against Bi-metallism, but I could not tell you why." But though in constant attendance, he deliberately refrained from attempting to "catch the Speaker's eye." "I shan't speak in the House this side of the Whitsuntide holidays," he wrote after a month's experience of Parliament; "it is better not to appear too eager. Get a good

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opportunity, and make the best of it—that's the point." He had not to wait long for the desirable opportunity.

In the early part of June, 1890, the Local Taxation (Customs and Excise) Duties Bill entered upon its Committee stage. The crux of the whole controversy over this Bill hinged upon the section providing for the allocation of the sum of £350,000 as compensation for the extinction of licenses. The issue was directly raised by an amendment moved by Mr. Arthur Acland to the effect that this special sum of money should be applied in England for the purpose of agricultural, commercial, and technical instruction, and in Wales either for the said purpose or for the purpose of the Welsh Intermediate Education Act. Mr. Acland justified such special treatment for the Principality on the strength of his own intimate knowledge of the zeal and passion of the Welsh people for higher education.

In view of the prominent part which he had taken on public platforms in opposition to the compensation clauses, Mr. Acland's amendment, with its special proviso for Welsh education, made an irresistible appeal to Lloyd George; and he saw in the discussion a favourable opportunity for the delivery of his maiden speech. "Let the cry against compensation increase in force and in intensity," he had written a month earlier to his uncle in explanation of his decision to remain silent; "then is the time to speak, I can do better myself then; the steam is hardly up yet."

Public opinion had been rising in opposition to the Government proposals, and in the House of Commons, as in the country, "steam was now up." On

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the 13th of June, he rose to speak for the first time. After asking for "the indulgence of the House," he proceeded to expose the Government proposals to a searching criticism.

In addition to the merit of succinctness, the speech displayed that aptness of simile which invariably characterises his public utterances. "Never," he declared, "has there been so puny an attempt to grapple with a great evil since the days when the Lilliputian king drew his hanger to attack Gulliver." After a reference to the fact that Lord Randolph Churchill and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain had "joined in the duty of praising compensation," although the former only a few months earlier had introduced a Bill based on the principle of popular control over the issue of licenses, while the latter had "promulgated in Wales the doctrine of ransom, which is the exact converse of compensation," he proceeded to describe the two eminent statesmen as "a kind of political contortionists, after the fashion of the American performers" (a topical allusion to a troupe who at that time were giving a series of performances in one of the London halls), "who can set their feet in one direction and their face in another, so that no one knows which way they intend to travel."

Commendably brief, and extremely racy alike in its texture and delivery, the speech captivated the House. "There was a very good audience," wrote Lloyd George of the occasion, "and although at first they appeared to be indifferent, as they generally are when insignificant Members speak, they soon—both sides—listened attentively. If I am to judge by the

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cheers I got during the progress of my speech, and immediately after I sat down, and also the congratulations I received, I must have succeeded beyond my very highest expectations."

Lloyd George was immediately followed by T. W. Russell, a gifted Irish orator, who congratulated the young Member on having delivered "a maiden speech which has charmed us all"—a tribute which evoked an outburst of assenting cheers from all parts of the House.

"I well remember the occasion of Mr. Lloyd George's maiden speech," wrote Mr. Russell in later years, "and I remember it all the more because I had made a special journey to the Carnarvon Boroughs at the by-election to speak in opposition to his candidature. He was strongly opposed to the Government measure which was so commonly described in those days as the Publican Endowment Bill, and no one made a clearer case against its proposals than he. Although detesting the whole drink traffic, I was nevertheless willing to get rid of a part of it even at a price, and for that reason I supported the Government proposals. Fresh from his triumph at the by-election, Mr. Lloyd George spoke with such skill and ease that he was heard with delight by the whole House. Even on the Unionist benches everybody was charmed with his style. I remember remarking to a colleague who sat beside me: 'This man will go far.' And now, when I see how far he has gone, I am profoundly thankful that just a small handful of the electors saved him from that defeat which I had striven so hard to bring about."

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In the Lobby that evening many were the personal congratulations tendered to Lloyd George, and, naturally enough, he was much gratified when word reached him that no less eminent a personage than Sir William Harcourt had been heard speaking in high praise of his effort. Equally encouraging were the tributes that appeared in some of the leading journals on the morrow. A leading London daily described the speech as "rather clever," while the Parliamentary correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette* recorded that the "new Member for Carnarvon made a capital maiden speech, full of promise for his future career."

Encouraged by the success of his maiden speech, he sought to intensify the opposition to the compensation proposals of the Government; but he discovered, as many a Member of Parliament has done, that while the Speaker readily and even instinctively gives "the glad eye" to the maiden attempt of a Member, such preferential treatment is not extended to subsequent appeals. "After the maiden speech," wrote Lloyd George to his uncle in explanation of his disappointment over the non-delivery of a speech which he had carefully prepared, "it is very difficult to catch the Speaker's eye. But it does not matter, for the speech is like wine; it will improve with the keeping."

With the prorogation of Parliament in the month of August, Lloyd George's first session in the House of Commons was brought to a close. Exactly four months had elapsed since he had taken his seat, but even that brief period had sufficed to bring him no

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small measure of personal triumph. He had taken his place by the side of Tom Ellis as one of the most popular of the Parliamentary representatives of Wales, and already the Welsh people were acclaiming him as a national leader. His gift of telling speech had caught not merely the ear of the House, but also the attention of the leaders of his own party. Mr. Gladstone, Sir William Harcourt, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and others among the Front Bench statesmen discovered in the new Member a most promising Parliamentarian, while in the country he had gained popularity as an effective platform speaker.

Naturally enough, the lustre of his triumph was reflected upon his constituency. "Mr. Lloyd George," declared one Welsh journal with justifiable pride, "continues to march onward and onward. Every deliverance he makes upon a public platform in England raises him a step up the ladder of public estimation. It is only a matter of time," it confidently predicted, "for him to climb to a position of distinction in the political world."

VII

POLITICS, EDUCATION AND RELIGION

CHAPTER VII

POLITICS, EDUCATION AND RELIGION

THERE are many in these Boroughs," stated the *Carnarvon Herald* in an editorial note, shortly after Lloyd George's return to Parliament, "who are quite unable to see how Mr. George can be a lawyer in Portmadoc, and at the same time a legislator in London." It was a problem that exercised the minds of many of his constituents in face of the obvious difficulty of combining the exacting demands of his legal practice in a remote town on the Welsh Coast with his onerous duties at Westminster.

By a dispensation of circumstance which may be justly described as providential, Lloyd George found himself in the fortunate position of being able to follow his dominating passion for politics. His younger brother, William, who had already qualified as a solicitor and had joined him in partnership, readily undertook to bear the whole burden of the practice at Portmadoc so that he might be free to attend to his Parliamentary duties. And on the domestic, as on the professional, side of his circumstances the same sacrificial devotion to the interests of his career was made manifest, for, after the manner of his brother, his wife also helped to make easy the path of his appointed destiny. She agreed to leave

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the old home with its tender memories, and the district in which she was familiar with every face, in order to settle down in the loneliness of a great city among strangers in whose social life and habits the Cymric tradition of neighbourly hospitality finds no place.

"You will let Maggie know what has happened re Parnell if she cares a button, except that she rejoices in the affair as it has shortened the sitting," wrote Lloyd George, at the close of the year 1890, by way of a message to his wife, who was, at that time, on a visit to the old home at Criccieth—in a letter to his brother in which he was describing the fierce stubbornness with which the Irish leader was frustrating every attempt at his deposition. The suggestion was self-evident. He realised that the heart of his young wife, who had shirked no sacrifice in his personal advancement, was still among her native hills and that political crisis had neither meaning nor interest for her, only so far as they tended to shorten the session and thus enabled her to return from the loneliness of the great city to her native heath.

The Parliamentary recess, so far from diminishing the political zeal of the young Member, who had attended to his new duties with the most exacting devotion, served only to quicken it, for during the autumn he addressed a larger number of political gatherings than any of his fellow-members.

Among these gatherings was a great Liberal demonstration held in the early part of October at St. Helen's, which was attended by John Morley as the principal speaker. Lloyd George naturally appreciated the compliment of being invited to share the plat-

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form with so distinguished a Parliamentary, and he rose to the level of so strategic an opportunity by delivering a speech that made a deep impression upon the audience which found articulation in the generous tribute which Mr. Morley paid to its conspicuous merit. "You were, I think, rewarded," declared the eminent statesman, in acknowledging a vote of thanks, "for the patience with which you have listened to my speech by the very brilliant address of my young colleague. It does one's heart good to see, to feel, to know that when we of an older generation are gone, there are others ready and capable of taking the lamp of progress into their hands."

In the winter of 1890, Parliament reassembled and the Government introduced as the first of their legislative measures the Tithe Rent Charge Recovery Bill, which, for want of time, they had been unable to pass into law in the previous session. The main purpose of the measure was the transference of the incidence of tithe from the tenant of tithe land to the landowner. On the occasion of its reintroduction, Sir Michael Hicks Beach admitted that the Bill was the direct result of the widespread resistance among the farmers of Wales to the payment of tithe, especially of the scenes of violence which invariably marked such resistance. By diverting the obligation of payment from the tenants, who were bitterly opposed to the Established Church, to the landowners, who were almost exclusively within its pale, the Welsh farmers would obviously be out-manœuvred in their strategic campaign of active resistance, and a recurrence of the tithe riots would become impossible.

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Although the Bill was opposed by the Welsh Members on the broad principle that no measure could be satisfactory to the people of Wales which did not declare tithes to be national property for the use and benefit of the whole community rather than of a privileged section, Lloyd George readily discovered that, although the measure had been framed primarily in the interests of the clergy of the Established Church, it contained elements which would be found invaluable should Welsh Disestablishment become an accomplished fact.

For that reason he set himself to improve, rather than to destroy, the handiwork of the Government; and to that end he tabled a number of amendments during the Committee stage.

Not only did he move more amendments than any other Member in course of the Committee stage, but his amendments were framed with such skill that even the Attorney-General felt constrained to pay him a tribute for "the great acuteness" which he had displayed in regard to the whole Bill. One of his amendments was accepted, while another was rejected by only thirty votes—the smallest majority recorded for the Government. On one evening he delivered no fewer than seven speeches in course of the discussion on various clauses—"just to show them that I could do it," as he subsequently explained in a letter to his brother. In this spirited and untiring fight in Committee, he received invaluable aid from his colleague, Mr. S. T. Evans.¹ "These two young

¹Mr. S. T. Evans was at that time the Member for Mid-Glamorgan. He became the Solicitor-General in Sir Henry Camp-

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Welsh Members," declared a leading London journal, "are showing themselves not only to be effective debaters, but to be possessed of keen dialectical skill." The meed was well bestowed. "There is no doubt whatever," wrote Lloyd George to his brother, "that Evans and I have taken a decided step forward in the estimation of the House. We receive congratulations on all sides. And indeed we have fought hard. We have stuck to our seats day by day from 3 until 12 every night while this Tithe Bill has been on."

Early in the month of February, 1891, the Government introduced a Free Education Bill, and Lloyd George, anticipating another keen fight, forthwith prepared for the fray. "I am getting up facts from the Blue Books upon the Free Education Debate," he wrote, "but so far I have only got the material together. I have not unearthed any diamonds in doing so, but plenty of cold steel." To his chagrin he learned that, awed by the popularity of the measure, the official spokesmen of the Liberal Party were averse to a policy of open hostility. "The Liberal leaders are showing funk," he complained in a letter to his brother; "they don't want to fight. A great mistake, of course," he added with characteristic spirit.

Undeterred by the misgivings which were silencing his leaders, the Member for Carnarvon revelled in the

bell-Bannerman's Ministry and was subsequently promoted to the Presidency of the Divorce and Admiralty Court. He won much renown as the President of the Prize Court during the period of the Great War.

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prospect of another fight. "Probably," he wrote, "there will be a debate of two nights' duration. If this is so, I shall have my chance." On June 23rd, on the occasion of the debate on the second reading of the Bill, Lloyd George had his chance, and he seized it by delivering a speech so trenchant in style and so effective in its thrusts that, to quote his own phraseology, "it made the other side very angry and my own very pleased."

In the course of his speech Lloyd George had cited the case of a locality in Carnarvonshire where, although the Nonconformists were in an overwhelming majority, they were given no representation on the committee of management of the only school in the locality, nor could they procure a site for the erection of an undenominational school, much as they desired to do so, because all the land was in the hands of the Church landlords.

This obvious reference to the village of Llanystumdwy had the immediate effect of eliciting from Mr. Ellis Nanney, his vanquished opponent at the by-election, an epistolary rejoinder in the course of which he pointed out that, whatever might be said of Nonconformist grievances in regard to educational facilities, Lloyd George himself had not suffered in that respect, for "he has been taught most of what he knows at the Church school which was given by my late father. Amongst other good things, I trust, he was taught the value of accuracy there, but he seems, apparently, soon to have forgotten his lesson."

Lloyd George's retort was swift and crushing. "Surely," he replied, "the vaunting vendor of a hun-

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dred lots of land can command a better article in the satirical line than this sorry specimen. Still, it must be remembered that even in writing that very letter he has to remind himself that even after disposing of a hundred lots of his estate he still remains a small country squire who has been flung aside by his neighbours for the sake of a country lad educated at a school 'given by my father.' That must be very exasperating, and a breach of good taste is inevitable when keen chagrin handles a dull wit. But he is wrong in assuming that I was taught the value of accuracy at the Llanystumdwy Church School. On the contrary, my first lesson there consisted in the repetition of a series of falsehoods. I was taught daily to say that I had been endowed by my godfathers and godmothers in my baptism with a certain name, whereas I was utterly unblessed with the possession of such spiritual patronage. Many more similar inaccuracies was I trained to utter. If, therefore, Church school pupils were occasionally to fail in their facts, good Churchmen ought to forbear."

At the close of the '91 session, the National Liberal Federation met at Newcastle for its annual gathering, and in view of the approaching dissolution of Parliament and of the probable triumph of the Liberals at the polls, public interest in the proceedings was greatly quickened. On every hand there was a consensus of feeling that the Newcastle programme would mark the adumbration of the legislative proposals of the incoming Government, and, sensible of the strategic value of the occasion, Lloyd George attended the meeting. He was given the vantage ground of the

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Federation platform for an impassioned appeal to the assembled delegates to espouse the demand of the Welsh people, and each made full use of his opportunity.

"The great incident of the National Liberal Federation meetings at Newcastle," wrote one who was present on the occasion,¹ "was the unexpected advance of Mr. Lloyd George into the front of Liberal speakers. He roused his hearers by his imaginative fervour. He spoke, in a startlingly fine metaphor, of the people of Wales marching forward to impress their views of the political situation on the people of England. The phrasing, the gesture and the enunciation were so vivid that one seemed to hear the march of an oncoming army. This passage of the speech might have been a description of the impetuous rush of his own coming forward. Up to that time he had been little known on English platforms; but from the moment of this speech he was in the situation of Byron when he awoke one morning to find himself famous."

"The speech of the evening," declared one of the Newcastle newspapers on the morrow of the meeting, "was decidedly that of Mr. Lloyd George, the Member for the Carnarvon Boroughs. He soon had the meeting with him, and in a light, clear voice, with something resembling an Irish tone in it, he delivered a speech remarkable not only for its force of argument but for its patriotism, its eloquence and its singular picturesqueness of style and action. It sufficed in itself to give distinction to the meeting."

¹ Mr. Aaron Watson in "The Memories of a Newspaper Man."

VIII
OBSTRUCTION AND A GENERAL
ELECTION

CHAPTER VIII

OBSTRUCTION AND A GENERAL ELECTION

LLOYD GEORGE has never lacked advisers and critics, friendly and otherwise. In the early months of his Parliamentary career, one who was friendly disposed towards him tendered this advice: "Get up your political philosophy. A good six months' hard grinding at Maine and Aristotle, Hobbs and Locke and Burke, would do you a world of good. You have great powers, both of thinking and of talking, but they require training and cultivation. About you there are great possibilities—possibilities that may end in much or in nothing."

Such counsel, well meant as it was, missed its mark. Every man is a law unto himself, and knows instinctively the bias of his destiny. The dust-covered tomes of abstruse treatises on political philosophy had obviously no attraction for the young Member. To one like himself, endowed with so highly sensitive a touch to his more immediate surroundings, a live dog must necessarily be an object of greater importance than a dead lion; and it is therefore not surprising that he should have found it more interesting and profitable to be in vitalising contact with the living personalities that dominated Westminster than poring over the printed pages of classic authors. Chamberlain, Rose-

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bery and Asquith represented for him greater values than Aristotle, Hobbs and Locke, and for that reason he concentrated his interest and his observations upon them.

Happily, his studies in the personalities of Parliament have been preserved for us in a number of articles which he contributed in Welsh to the columns of a leading vernacular journal published at Carnarvon. These articles consisted of a series of brilliant sketches, sure in their insight into character, and with a master touch of vivid delineation.

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain he described as "an extraordinary man, who has cleaved his way by sheer strength. He is a strong, forcible, but rather savage personality, and the secret of his strength seems to be that he knows his own mind. Though his horizon is not very extensive, he sees very clearly what lies within the range of his vision, and he goes straight for his purpose ruthlessly and relentlessly. Not an orator like Mr. Gladstone, never displaying much imagination or given to flights of fancy, he yet possesses the rare power of lucidity of utterance. He is much more aggressive and far more persistent by nature than Mr. Balfour. Balfour is regarded by those who know him as rather easy-going. He has never been really a hard worker. When Secretary for Ireland he roused himself more than he had ever done before in his career, but even then he received without questioning any explanation sent by the Irish Constabulary in regard to any complaint submitted to him. It was much less troublesome to do that than to investigate the matter himself. But Chamberlain is quite dif-

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ferent. He is full of quicksilver, constantly on the move, and bubbling over with energised vitality."

Of Lord Rosebery Mr. Lloyd George wrote: "He has an extremely youthful face, handsome and full. He is a strange man in many ways. It is admitted on all sides that he is the finest Foreign Secretary that this country has had since the time of Palmerston. He is full of genius. Born under the canopy of purple, he has intellect and wealth, but the bane of his life is that he was born a lord at all. It would have been better for him to have been the son of the lowliest peasant on his estate than to have been born a lord. There is too much energy and too much of the fighting spirit in his constitution not to dislike the House of Lords. He is always bemoaning his fate in that he cannot be elected to the House of Commons. But the doors of the popular Chamber have been closed against him more surely than against one of his own men-servants. He heartily dislikes the House of Lords. He has described it as the Chamber of Death where efficient measures are put an end to."

Mr. Asquith was delineated as "a short, sturdy man, with round shoulders, with a face as clean-shaven as that of a latter-day curate; has keen eyes and a broad, intellectual forehead. He is only a little over forty, and yet he has already won a high position in the political world. As a Parliamentary speaker, he is excelled by one only. He speaks clearly and with emphasis. He drives his argument home with telling force. One of the proofs of his innate strength is that in spite of every misfortune that has crossed his path—notably the Featherstone disaster—he has attained,

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in the universal opinion of both Parliament and the country at large, to one of the highest positions in regard to influence in the Government of the country. It is a hopeful sign that this new captain is a democrat to the backbone. His early training and the traditions of his youth are closely associated with Nonconformist influences, and in the midst of a council of Churchmen and of proselytes this is a matter of no little moment."

But Parliament itself, no less than its leading personalities, had its charm for him. "The House of Commons," he wrote, within a few weeks of his advent into its atmosphere, "is essentially democratic. It cares nothing for rank nor for wealth. It is bored by a millionaire; it listens instantly to a some-time booking-clerk. It pays homage to knowledge, to talent, to statesmanship, and to genius."

Closer intimacy with the spirit and purpose of the House served only to deepen his admiration and arouse his critical faculties. "Some men go to Parliament," he declared in a speech in the autumn of 1891, "for social distinction—merely to improve their social position. That is of all classes the most despicable. These are men who prefer a Duke's smile to a people's blessing—men who prefer to have an introduction to the Queen's Drawing Room rather than to help to introduce comfort and happiness to thousands of poor homes in England. That class I despise. Some men go into the House of Commons to advance their own pecuniary interests. Too many of us lawyers do that," he smilingly added. "But then there is another class—the company promoters—the men who have the magic letters 'M.P.' added to their names in

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order to sell it to the highest bidder. These men are justly described as 'guinea pigs.' There is a third class, the men who go into Parliament in order to get on in the world. Of course, if that ambition is tempered with something that is good and beneficent, let men be as ambitious as they like. There is a further class—the best class—the men who go to the House with an earnest intention of purpose to use the opportunity they have in order to do what they can for the highest welfare of the people.”

The Government, encouraged by their triumph in passing into law their Tithe Rent Charge Recovery Bill, decided to take advantage of the remainder of their tenure of power by introducing further legislation in the interests of the Established Church. Accordingly, when the House reassembled in the early part of 1892, a Clergy Discipline (Immorality) Bill was submitted as a Government measure. In both purport and purpose, the Bill was self-explanatory. It sought to give fresh and more effective powers to ecclesiastical courts in their task of dealing with clergymen of the Church of England who had violated their vows of ordination, and had thus proved themselves unworthy of their high office. The Bill further provided for the idemnification of the Bishops in respect of the heavy costs, for which hitherto they had been personally responsible in the rightful discharge of their obligations to rid the Church of impure incumbents.

Brought forward as it was in the undoubted interests of religion, pure and undefiled, the Bill readily commended itself to the goodwill and support of all

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parties in the House; but Lloyd George was quick to scent in the situation a splendid opportunity for an effective flank attack on the principles of Church Establishment, by urging, on the one hand, the wisdom of a policy of non-intervention, on the part of a body like the House of Commons, composed as it is of men of all sects and creeds, in the domestic affairs of one particular sect; and, on the other hand, the culpable folly of diverting into the narrow channel of ecclesiasticism the energies and resources of Parliament at a time when important matters affecting the social well-being of the masses throughout the land were demanding urgent attention.

Lloyd George's opportunity came with the second reading of the Bill, which was moved in a lengthy speech by Mr. Balfour, in his new rôle as the First Lord of the Treasury and Leader of the House. As soon as Mr. Balfour resumed his seat, Lloyd George rose and moved an amendment; "That this House considers that it is no part of the functions of the State to attend to matters of Spiritual Discipline." At the outset of his speech he stigmatised the Bill as "a Bishops' Relief Bill and nothing else. It is time to get rid of these Clergy Relief Bills," he proceeded to say, "for it will be remembered that some time ago the clergy in Wales found their bailiff's bills getting too heavy, and important measures were stopped in order to discuss and to pass the Tithes Bill; and now we have a Bill to save the purses and the patience of the Bishops."

The dialectical effectiveness of the speech was demonstrated by the fact that Mr. Gladstone deemed it

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advisable, in the interests of the Bill, which he warmly espoused, to follow Lloyd George immediately in the debate. "I have listened with great care to the elaborate speech of my honourable friend, and with anxiety to take the just measure of the arguments he has used against the Bill," declared the famous statesman. "I confess I was disappointed in my examination of his arguments, but," he was just enough to add, "I do not think my honourable friend has failed in his task—that is to say, I have no reason to believe that any other member of the House could have made a better case than he has made."

The veteran statesman paid Lloyd George's speech a still higher compliment by devoting the whole of his own speech to an elaborate review of his contentions and to a refutation of his arguments.

The combination of such gladiators as Balfour and Gladstone in a common cause was much too formidable to be routed by the gallant little Welsh band commanded by the youthful Member for the Carnarvon Boroughs. The Division lobbies revealed the sparseness of their forces, for on the main question there were found only seventeen in the "No" lobby.

But Lloyd George and his Welsh colleague were not to be thwarted in their purpose even by so overwhelming a defeat in the division lobby. Repulsed on the open field, they resorted to guerilla warfare. The Bill was referred to the Grand Committee on Law—under Campbell-Bannerman's chairmanship, and in view of possible contingencies, Mr. Gladstone deemed it wise to be nominated to the Committee, although he had not within the memory of any member of

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the House been known to serve on any of the Standing Committees.

His anticipations of trouble were speedily fulfilled, for Lloyd George and S. T. Evans, actively aided by Tom Ellis, immediately opened hostilities. With an ingenuity begotten of an extraordinary mastery of ecclesiastical law and organization, they framed amendments to every clause and sub-section in the Bill, and they spoke on the successive amendments at length, and with such cogency and relevancy, that the Chairman, with all his anxiety to make progress with the passage of the Bill, found himself powerless to restrain either the voluminousness of these amendments or the prolixity of the discussions.

At first Gladstone was content to reason with this little rebel section of his followers in the hope of inducing them to relent in their attitude; but so far from being successful in their purpose his speeches served only to gladden them, for they saw that the more and the longer he spoke, the more protracted would be the sittings of the Committee. The futility of his efforts brought home to the veteran statesman the disconcerting fact that his speeches were being welcomed as mere counters in the game of obstruction. "After that," in Lloyd George's own words, "the Grand Old Man would just sit and shake his head at us when we moved an amendment, and glare at us with his fierce eye—ah, how fierce when you were fighting him!"

The rebels proved as impervious to Mr. Gladstone's frowns as they had been to his appeals. They pursued their tactics so relentlessly that on one occasion

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the Committee was kept sitting for no less than seven hours—an experience unprecedented in the annals of Grand Committees—and as a result Mr. Gladstone had to content himself with barely a quarter of an hour for lunch. With a view of checkmating the vigour of the obstructionists and of exhausting their physical resources, it was resolved that the Committee should not only increase the number of its sittings, but should sit continuously each day without the usual adjournment for lunch. At the same time, arrangements were quietly made for dividing the supporters of the Bill into a number of relays, so that each section would, in turn, be free to leave the Committee room to secure the necessary refreshment.

But in vain was the net spread in the sight of the birds, for with the blandest of smiles Lloyd George assured the Committee that both he and S. T. Evans were prepared to sit every day in the week, Sunday included. It was soon made manifest that they were fully equipped for all emergencies, for with the approach of the luncheon hour—when the first batch of Members were preparing to leave in accordance with the prearranged plans—it was observed that Lloyd George and his colleague had taken the precaution of bringing a supply of sandwiches, with the result that, while the one was on his feet engaged in the congenial task of obstructing the progress of the Bill, the other was quietly preparing himself for the fray by taking advantage of the opportunity to renew his strength with material sustenance.

Balked in their purposes, the supporters of the Bill became alarmed for its fate, and Mr. Balfour found it

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necessary to resort to the unprecedented course of obtaining from the House of Commons fresh and drastic powers for the Committee in their efforts to beat down the delinquents. Although fully exercised, those fresh powers proved inadequate, and Campbell-Bannerman found it necessary to resort to a ruthless and arbitrary exercise of the authority of the Chair in grim resolve to force the Bill through its Committee stage. Even then the measure was by no means out of danger. There still remained the Report Stage, with its opportunities for the renewal on the floor of the House of those tactics which had so bewildered and baffled the Committee upstairs.

As soon as the Report Stage was reached, there appeared on the Order Paper as many as 118 amendments, and of these Lloyd George and his associates were responsible for no fewer than a hundred. These amendments were framed with consummate cleverness, for they were of such a character as would under ordinary circumstances, have readily commended themselves to the approval of those who were genuinely concerned for the purification of the Established Church. But the exigencies of the situation at Westminster were such as to render imperative the subordination of the spiritual interests of the Church to the stringent stipulations of the Government Whips that the Bill should go through its final stage with a minimum of discussion and with exemplary expeditiousness.

For the obstructionists, however, such stipulations had neither force nor meaning. They embarked upon a discussion of the various provisions of the Bill with

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as much zest as if it were a new measure being submitted to Parliament. Five hours were spent in discussing the first clause, and later, Division followed Division in quick succession.

At the outset of the debate, the supporters of the Government had been content to leave the little band of Welsh Members to speak to a beggarly array of empty benches, and had hied themselves away to the pleasures of the dinner-table. If only they had been permitted to enjoy the full flavour of such pleasures all might have gone well; but when time and again the Division bell summoned them back, their feelings of resentment towards Lloyd George and his companions increased in volume and in vehemence. They flocked into the Chamber and assailed each successive speaker with that raucous cry of "Vide—vide!" which so often, and so effectively, stifles discussion in the Commons.

After some nine or ten divisions had been taken, and amendment after amendment had been rejected by overwhelming majorities, Mr. Henniker Heaton rose to complain "of the manner in which the time of the House was being wasted," and he appealed to the Speaker to interfere in the interest of law and order. The reply of the Speaker was as suggestive as it was prompt. The House, he declared, had the remedy in its own hands if it thought its time was wasted—a declaration which evoked a great outburst of assenting cheers from the Government benches. Quick to grasp the significance of the Speaker's dictum, the Attorney-General immediately rose and called attention to the fact that on Clause 3 no fewer

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than twenty-three amendments stood in the names of two members only, and on the ground that the whole of those amendments referred largely to matters which could be duly set right in rules, he moved that the whole of the clause should forthwith stand part of the Bill. Thus at one single stroke the whole batch of cleverly contrived amendments were swept aside. Undeterred by this, Lloyd George and the others fought still harder. They opposed clause after clause with a stubbornness that knew no respite, and no fewer than twenty-two divisions were taken in the course of the sitting.

In such fashion did the Clergy Discipline Bill, after its long and hazardous course, manage to make its final passage through the Commons. Though unsuccessful in their purpose of wrecking the Bill, both Lloyd George and S. T. Evans emerged from the fray with the laurels of triumph. "It is indeed doubtful," declared a leading Liberal journal in reviewing the episode, "if Mr. Healy and Mr. Sexton are quite in it with these practitioners of the malignant art of obstruction. Many of the obstructionist devices of the Healyites have been clumsy and inartistic, and easily frustrated. But these Welsh doctrinaires of the licensed abuse of debate move with so much initial adroitness that when they are upset on a given point—are out-voted on one amendment—they promptly fashion another so like the first as to be only just on the side of order. The celerity with which they argue questions is quite admirable as an example of casuistry. New amendments rise out of old and rejected ones with a freedom that Mr. Healy, with all his knowl-

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edge of the 'black art', cannot even hope to improve upon or to exceed."

The Welsh people, however, saw in all this something of much greater import than an admirable example of "casuistry." "We hail as the dawn of a new and brighter era," declared one of the leading newspapers in Wales, "this unexpected revolt of the Celt, for, if it means anything, it means that Wales has at length drawn the sword and thrown away the scabbard."

Scarcely had Lloyd George emerged from his struggle at Westminster than he found himself faced with the far more formidable ordeal, necessitated by the General Election in the summer of that year, of again contesting the Carnarvon Boroughs. In the narrow interval of two years which marked off the two contests much had happened. The Member for the Carnarvon Boroughs had won for himself a commanding place among the accredited spokesmen of his native land, and his fame had spread throughout the country. But the vehemence of his public utterances had served to rouse latent antipathies, while his advanced political ideas were known to have created not a little restiveness among the more moderate men on his own side. His opponents, profiting by past experience, had taken the precaution of substituting for the territorial magnate of the previous contest a more attractive and popular type of candidate in the person of Sir John Puleston.

However, the knight and his blandishments were swept off the board, and Lloyd George was declared the victor by a majority of 196—more than tenfold greater

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than that of the previous contest. The triumph was made the occasion of great rejoicing throughout the constituency, and the victor was escorted along the ancient thoroughfares of Carnarvon by a torchlight procession headed by a great banner with the inscription: "THE VICTORY OF YOUNG WALES."

In face of the fact that Wales had, in proportion to its numbers, given Gladstone a larger measure of support than any other part of the United Kingdom—"greater even than that given by Ireland," as he publicly acknowledged—there was a general expectancy that, in token of his appreciation of such splendid loyalty, he would award some prominent places in his Administration to certain of the Liberal Members from Wales. Great therefore was the disappointment when it transpired that he had been content to allot to them only two places—and neither of them of first rank—in the new Ministry. To Sir George Osborne Morgan was given a sinecure, while Tom Ellis was made a Junior Lord of the Treasury—a position which carried with it the duties of second Whip. Notwithstanding the strong feeling that Wales had not received its due, there were not a few of Ellis's friends—and conspicuous among them was Lloyd George—who were smitten with serious misgivings over the matter. While ready to welcome his appointment as a well-merited recognition of marked capacity and as the earnest of further advancement, they could not close their eyes to the fact that of all official positions that of a Government Whip is, by the very nature of its duties, the most fatal to independence of action.

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Lloyd George's disappointment over Tom Ellis's decision to accept the proffered post was accentuated by a foreboding that, should it so happen that the political interests of Wales were found to clash with the exigencies of the Government, Ellis would not be in a position to enforce the just demands of the Welsh people.

Prior to Lloyd George's advent to Parliament the question of Welsh Disestablishment had been largely a matter of shop-window dressing for Liberal meetings in the Principality. It adorned perorations; it quickened popular enthusiasm; it evoked applause; and there its utility ended. It was Lloyd George's characteristic insistence that transformed a party shibboleth into a stern battle-cry and that crystallised evaporating emotion into definite purpose. As the result of his activities, Welsh Disestablishment became so dominant an issue in each of the Welsh constituencies at the General Election that the people realised that their demand for a religious equality had every prospect of being embodied in a Parliamentary Bill.

The General Election of 1892 had thus a special significance for Welshmen. Even the Home Rule issue which Mr. Gladstone was then submitting to the arbitrament of the British electorate was, in Wales, made subsidiary to the question of Welsh Disestablishment. Welsh Liberals were urged to support Gladstone's Irish policy on the ground that, in return for such support, Wales would be assured of a comprehensive scheme of Disestablishment. The result of the contests clearly demonstrated the strength and eagerness of the Welsh demand for religious equality.

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Amid the general jubilation Lloyd George foresaw the danger of the party managers robbing the triumph of its purport by interpreting the zeal and sacrifices of the Welsh peasantry as mere Party loyalty. Consequently his instinctive apprehensiveness asserted itself afresh.

"Wales has done remarkably well in the last election," he declared at a meeting of his constituents at Conway just as the last of the electoral returns were coming to hand, "for it has not only returned thirty-one Liberal Members out of a total representation of thirty-four, but the votes recorded for these Liberal Members are as two to one when compared to those cast for the Conservatives. Wales has achieved this in the teeth of unexampled difficulties. Why has it been done? It is very important that Liberal statesmen should understand clearly why Wales is so overwhelmingly Liberal at the present moment. It is not to instal one statesman in power. It is not to deprive one party of power in order to put another in power. It has been done because Wales has by an overwhelming majority demonstrated its determination to secure its own progress. Wales has returned the men most in sympathy with its needs, and with a determination to fight for its rights. The Welsh Members want nothing for themselves, but they must this time get something for our little country, and I do not think that they will support a Liberal Ministry—I care not how illustrious the Minister may be who leads it—unless it pledges itself to concede to Wales those great measures of reform upon which Wales has set its heart. Wales," he continued in a strain that

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reverberated throughout the whole of the Principality, "has lived long on promises. She has in hand a number of political I. O. U.'s from the leaders of one or other of these great parties in the State. One of these debtors is at the present time in a position to take up the note, and Wales is in a splendid position, by the exigencies of the electoral results, to insist upon prompt payment. The question is: Will she permit, or even encourage, her chief debtor to put her off with an offer to renew the note, or shall she make it clear that this time she is going to insist upon prompt cash, and will absolutely give no further credit? If instead of this cash payment the Welsh Members accept a fresh I. O. U., or renew the promissory notes, or assent to any arrangements for deferring the payment of a debt long overdue, the country must regard them as unfaithful stewards and deal with them accordingly."

His veneration for Mr. Gladstone, however, was such as to stay his hand during the first months of the new Ministry, and he contented himself with urging on Welsh Nonconformists the duty of patience until the time came for the development of events. "At present," he declared, "the most effectual way to help Wales is by silence. It may be that circumstances may occur which will cause us to change our policy, but, until such circumstances arise, our policy must be one of waiting."

Early in the session of 1893 Mr. Asquith, in his capacity as Home Secretary, introduced a Suspensory Bill, which, designed as it was "to prevent for a limited time the creation of new interests in Church

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of England bishoprics, dignitaries, and benefices in Wales and Monmouthshire," was readily accepted by the Welsh Members as the official committal of the Government to the wider issue of Disestablishment and as a gratifying assurance of its determination to deal comprehensively and finally with the whole question on the lines demanded by the Welsh people.

"The Home Secretary," wrote Lloyd George in a descriptive sketch of the occasion, "is regarded as holding in the 1892 Parliament the position occupied by Mr. Chamberlain in 1880 and 1885. It is on him that the hopes of the Radicals are fixed. He was the very man to introduce Disestablishment. He delivered a very characteristic speech—lucid, resolute, thoroughly well-prepared, without any dry or ponderous passages. He made an important change in the plan of the measure. He had at the outset intended to bring in a Bill for suspending appointments to vacancies until the Church had been disestablished. Such a step would have aroused strong opposition. Instead of that Mr. Asquith introduced a Bill which provided that no clergyman, after the passage of the Bill into law, should have a claim to compensation on being deprived of his curacy as the result of Parliamentary legislation—a far better idea, I think."

Notwithstanding all this, there was no perceptible approach to the consummation of Welsh Disestablishment. "How are we to find a way out of the maze?" inquired Lloyd George in a disquieting note in June, 1893. "Mr. Gladstone says, 'By being patient!' For my part, I shall be quite satisfied if we get Disestablishment next year."

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However, the Welsh Members, patient though they were, began to grow suspicious of the intentions of the Government, and to harbour an uneasy feeling that the Suspensory Bill had been introduced, not as a first instalment of a comprehensive measure, as they had imagined, but rather as a mere sleeping draught. This led Lloyd George to initiate a formal communication from the Welsh Members to Mr. Gladstone, reminding him that the Newcastle programme—"the official charter of Liberal policy at the last General Election"—conceded to the Welsh demand a second place in the schedule of grievances calling for treatment at the hands of the Liberal Party. The memorial referred to "the disquieting rumours" that the Government intended to postpone the consideration of the Welsh Church question until such measures as the Parish Councils Bill and the London Equalisation of Rates Bill had been disposed of. "Such a displacement of our cause," declared the memorial, "would be productive of the gravest consequences. It would result in the loss of several seats in Wales, and in weakness and defection in our own ranks."

To this communication Mr. Gladstone was content to point out that "the Newcastle deliberations announced no plan with regard to the order of business beyond the express declarations which may have been contained in them." So unsatisfactory a reply served to evoke from the Welsh Members a further and a stiffer communication reminding the Liberal leader of the hitherto unswerving loyalty of Wales to the Liberal Party, but that such devotion would be seriously imperilled unless the Government placed in

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the foreground of its programme for the following session not a preliminary but a final and complete measure for the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church in Wales.

Mr. Gladstone discerned the red light of danger, and he hastened to mollify the Welsh Members with the assurance that "at the first moment when deliberations of reasonable solidity on the subject of priority become possible, we shall approach the question with the firm intention so to handle it amidst competing and conflicting claims as to avert whatever may threaten to deprive Wales of the advantage attaching to the position she has acquired."

It was left to Lloyd George to emphasise the significance of this assurance. "A Welsh Disestablishment Bill," he declared on a public platform in Wales, shortly after the receipt of Mr. Gladstone's communication, "will be through the House of Commons next year, or the Liberal Ministry will not be there." This declaration was enthusiastically endorsed both by Liberal organisations throughout the Principality and by the assemblies of the leading Nonconformist bodies. Resolutions in ready support of the policy thus adumbrated were adopted at public meetings with an unbroken unanimity.

The next move lay with Mr. Gladstone, and Welsh opinion was very much exercised in regard to its probable direction. He had already said that so far as he was concerned, the Liberal programme contained only one single item of importance—that of Irish Home Rule; and that he regarded that as almost, if not altogether, his sole link with public life. More-

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over, there was a feeling in Welsh political circles that Gladstone's predilection for the Anglican Church would, at the crucial moment, so assert itself as to affect the issue.

All speculation in regard to the veteran statesman's attitude ended with his dramatic and unexpected retirement from the Premiership early in the following session. With Lord Rosebery's advent to the leadership, and, still more, with the appointment of Tom Ellis to the responsible position of Chief Whip—an appointment hailed throughout all Wales with the greatest joy—the hopes of Welsh Nonconformists were given a fresh impetus; for never in their political history had the auspices been so favourable. The long period of sore travail was at last passing away and the hour of deliverance was at hand. But once again there was only disillusionment, for when the new Ministry issued its legislative programme for the session, it was found that Welsh Disestablishment was given all but the last place in point of order. As Lloyd George pointed out with studied scorn, although it had been given second place in the Newcastle programme, it came barely tenth in the Government plan.

In their natural anxiety to learn the intentions of the Government, the Welsh Members approached Sir William Harcourt, who had become the leader of the House of Commons, but to all their entreaties for information he turned a deaf ear. He declined to specify any definite date for the introduction of the Welsh Bill or to give any pledge in regard to its progress. Lloyd George refused to submit to so haughty

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and repellent an attitude. He reminded his Welsh colleagues of their decision in the previous session to withhold their support from the Government unless definite and satisfactory assurances were forthcoming regarding the Disestablishment Bill, and, in view of the refusal of the Government to give the desired undertaking, he urged them to act on that resolution.

To his chagrin he found that, notwithstanding all the threats and philippics in which the Welsh Members had indulged, only three of them were prepared to join him in putting their heroic resolutions to the test of action; and their decision was all the more noteworthy in the light of the fact that, with one exception, they, in common with Lloyd George, held their seats by the narrowest of margins.

From Westminster Lloyd George hurried back to Wales, to justify his action in thus instigating a revolt against the Government among his colleagues. "Just now," he declared in a speech at Carnarvon, "the character of the Welsh nation is at stake. Are we to go to the Government in a humiliating spirit and say that we have transgressed, and that we only meant to frighten, after the manner of Sir Andrew Aguecheek, in one of Shakespeare's plays, who, after making a challenge, cowered when he found his opponent was ready to stand his ground? Have we, as a nation, enough firmness to face difficulties? If not, then we are not worth fighting for. We must rely upon our strength, for the English people are not in earnest. They are inclined to regard the Welsh as mere parasites. Mr. Gladstone on one occasion remarked that we are, as a people, too sheep-like. Is it not true that there

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is some force in his observation? We have followed the Liberal Party whichever way it has gone. The Welsh people have patience and forbearance—no other nation has exhibited these qualities in a larger measure. But the time has now come for us to show that we have also boldness in facing difficulties. Hitherto the people of Wales have had nothing but promissory notes at the hands of the Government. It is high time that we had cash down. I confess that I am not prepared to renew the bill except on one consideration—namely, that it be paid on its next presentation.”

The Carnarvon meeting was followed by an equally enthusiastic gathering in Bangor, at which Mr. Lloyd George reminded his constituents that the traditional loyalty of Wales to the interests of Liberalism had hitherto brought to the Welsh people nothing but contempt. “The Liberal Party in the past,” he exclaimed in caustic tones, “had but to whistle and off we scampered, until we were breathless with running in its service. When famished for the want of an occasional bone to keep up our Liberal strength, we might bark a little, but we had only to be brought face to face with our Liberal masters and we skulked back to our kennels like a pack of whipped curs.”

With a unanimity equalled only by the spontaneity of its expression Lloyd George’s constituents approved of his action and rallied to his side; and, thus strengthened, he, accompanied by his three fellow-revolters, set out on a tour through Wales for the purpose of justifying the determining motive of their action. The pilgrimage rapidly developed into a crusade, and

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in town after town they were enthusiastically hailed by great crowds as national heroes. Wherever meetings were held, the result was invariably a unanimous endorsement of the independent action taken by the four.

From the moment when the suspicions of the Welsh Members were aroused as to the attitude of the Government towards Disestablishment, every endeavour was made to enlist the open approval and support of Tom Ellis. It was maintained that the demand for immediate action was but the fruition of ideas which he had strenuously advocated in the early stages of his Parliamentary career; and if his adherence could be secured his prestige was such as would largely determine the attitude of his countrymen. Accordingly, pressure was brought to bear upon him to subordinate all considerations of his official position to the stern demands of the moment, but the attitude of Ellis was severely cautious and critical.

But though he had turned a deaf ear to the importunities of the impatient, Ellis was not blind to the significance of the growing agitation. With his finger on the political pulse of the Principality, he saw in the popularity of the revolt the unmistakable manifestation of a deep-seated disaffection, and he realised that grave complications would result from the defection of the four Welsh Members unless steps were taken to deal with the situation and to redress the grievance. The Government therefore, on the advice of Ellis, decided to introduce forthwith a Welsh Disestablishment Bill, while Lord Rosebery, in the course of an important speech at Birmingham, went

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out of his way to give a definite assurance that the Government would pass the Bill through all its stages in the Commons before they prepared to make a fresh appeal to the electorate. This declaration was justly hailed by Lloyd George as a vindication of the course adopted by himself and his colleagues.

The Bill was introduced in a trenchant speech by Mr. Asquith on Thursday, April 26th, and, after a full day's tournament, in which leading politicians on both sides of the House took part, the debate was adjourned, on the motion of Lloyd George, until the following Monday. The respite afforded him an opportunity for the preparation of a convincing statement of the Welsh demand, and he made full use of it, with the result that he held a crowded House in close attention with a speech which displayed all the characteristic excellencies of his oratory. At the outset he marshalled an effective array of startling statistics with which he refuted the claim made by the Opposition that the Established Church in Wales was increasing in a greater ratio than Welsh Nonconformity. Then, in passages of passionate declamation, the speech developed into a fervid vindication of Wales to the title and prestige of a nation, and it closed with a glowing picture of the wrongs which Wales had long suffered from the presence of an alien Church in its midst.

Mr. Balfour, as Leader of the Opposition, deemed it necessary to follow, and to devote the greater part of his remarks to the scathing strictures of "the exponent of Welsh Nonconformity," as he described the Member for Carnarvon, whom he severely rebuked

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for the bitterness of his attack upon the Established Church.

The *Manchester Guardian*, in the course of a leading article on the following day, emphasised the real significance of Mr. Lloyd George's invective. "Mr. Lloyd George's speech," it declared, "will be a revelation to most Englishmen of the unsuspected depths of passionate animosity entertained by the Welsh masses for the English Church in Wales. The temper may be bitter and it may be unjust, but it clearly exists, in formidable strength, and it is a good thing that Englishmen should be left under no illusion on that point."

IX

THE "YOUNG WALES" MOVEMENT. A
WIDER OUTLOOK. THE VOLUNTARY
SCHOOLS BILL

CHAPTER IX

THE "YOUNG WALES" MOVEMENT. A WIDER OUTLOOK. THE VOLUNTARY SCHOOLS BILL

THE revolt of the four Welsh Members achieved a greater result than its immediate purpose of forcing the Government to action. It created anew the sterner spirit of Welsh politics, the determination to subordinate mere party considerations to the higher interests of Cymric nationality.

"Hitherto," declared Mr. Lloyd George at a meeting of his constituents at Bangor, "Welsh support has fetched nothing in the political market, and it is time in the interests of Wales to initiate a new policy." He reminded his audience on a later occasion that, so far from this being a new theory or a recent discovery on his part, he had advocated its necessity on his first appearance on a public platform at Bangor, and he justly claimed that he had since urged it both in and, as he put it, occasionally out of season.

He made no secret that the policy which appealed to him was that of the Irish Party, with its freedom and readiness to take full advantage of the kaleidoscopic changes in the political situation for striking a profitable bargain with whatever Party that happened to be in power.

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Prior to his advent to Parliament, Lloyd George had striven for the fusion of the two leading political organisations in Wales—the North Wales Liberal Federation and the South Wales Liberal Federation—into one central body to be known as the Welsh National League. But notwithstanding the force and reason of his arguments, he had failed in his purpose. Vested interests were too deeply rooted to be torn up, and the two separate organisations, with their plethora of officials and committees, were left to cumber the ground.

Profiting by that early experience, and mindful of the fossilised character of the two existing Federations, he resolved on the creation of a new organisation which should be free from their inherent weaknesses. He stipulated that this new League should be broad-based upon the national unity of Wales “with no division into North and South Wales, with its distracting and dividing influences, but a united Wales.” The distinctiveness of this new organisation was reflected in its designation “Cymru Fydd,”¹ while the comprehensiveness of its purpose was manifested in a series of definite objects comprising the conservation of the national individuality of Wales, the furtherance of special legislation on national lines, the preservation of the Welsh language with the cultivation of native literature, art and music, and also the promotion of the return to Parliament of Members definitely pledged to support the policy of the League.

With Lloyd George, a concept is not long cherished before he seeks its practical realisation; and the ideal of

¹ The Welsh equivalent for the phrase “Young Wales.”

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"Young Wales" was no exception. He followed up the inception of the movement with a crusade throughout all Wales to proclaim, with all the fervour of a friar, the new evangel of Welsh Nationalism. "We must be true to our nationality," he declared in speech after speech, "for the lesson that Welsh patriotism has to teach us is that we cannot be good men unless we are good Welshmen to start with. We may admire England to our heart's content, but let us not mimic it. The first and foremost article in our creed should be fidelity to our own country and our people. There have been men in the past who gladly sacrificed everything they had for Wales. It is only when the whole nation is possessed by the spirit of their high example that we shall make any real progress. We who are young men on the threshold of manhood—in full possession of the faculties and energies with which Providence has endowed us—are entitled to ask whether our time must be frittered away like that of our forefathers in a policy of vain expectation for the good that is coming to our country, or whether we should not at once bend our whole vigour and strength to the task of freeing her from all oppressions, so that when the time comes for us to be gathered to our fathers, we shall carry into the tomb not a wreath of faded hopes, but trophies of real victories which we have helped to win for the freedom, the honour and the greatness of the little land we all so cherish."

It needs no touch of imagination to depict the thrilling effect of such eloquent appeals upon the emotions of a people proverbially susceptible to the charms of

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oratory. The heart of Wales was stirred as, hitherto, it had been stirred only by great princes of its pulpit.

"Do you intend to have an Independent Welsh Party," inquired a Parliamentary pressman of Mr. Lloyd George, at that period. "Certainly," was his immediate and emphatic reply, "that is our aspiration—a 'Young Wales' Party with 'National' motives. You will find it an accomplished fact after the next General Election. The idea of Nationality," he added, "is a vigorous and growing one, and, as a compact band, we shall get our wants promptly attended to by the Liberal Party, in addition to being able to squeeze the Tories when in office."

"And your distinctive platform?" queried the interviewer.

"Disestablishment first and foremost; that question is the battle ground upon which our very existence as a nation has been challenged. It must therefore be decided first. Then Land Reform must come—a most pressing subject. Finally, Local Veto and Home Rule for Wales."

Among the proposals embodied in the Government Bill was one for the appointment of three Commissioners to whom would be entrusted the administration of the liberated tithe of Wales. Lloyd George stoutly opposed such a proposal on the ground that it was an intolerable insult to the manhood of Wales, and the insult was aggravated by the announcement that two of the proposed Commissioners were either Englishmen or Scotsmen, both of them dubious Liberals, the only Welshman being a Conservative, and all three Churchmen. He moved an amendment,

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approved by the Welsh Members as a body, that the property should be managed by a Welsh National Council elected by the County Councils of Wales.

Mr. Asquith was, in Lloyd George's phrase, "at first very stubborn," and he flatly refused to entertain such a proposal. However, "as the result of a little gentle pressure," as Lloyd George euphemistically described his own unyielding determination to force the amendment to a division, the Home Secretary was ultimately won over to its acceptance as an integral part of the Bill. But ere the Committee stage of the Welsh Bill could again be resumed, the Government suffered defeat in a division on the question of the supply of cordite, with the result that Parliament was forthwith dissolved and an appeal made to the country.

Once more Lloyd George found himself in the throes of a bitter electoral contest. Never were his opponents so absolutely sanguine of victory as on this occasion. All the omens were exceptionally favourable. A staid section among the Liberals in the constituency were known to be sore and sullen in respect of the revolt of the previous year, and especially in regard to Lloyd George's action in forcing upon the Liberal Government the acceptance of his amendment to the Welsh Bill. Moreover, the Conservatives had succeeded in persuading Mr. Ellis Nanney—confessedly their most doughty champion—again to come forward to do battle for their cause.

A few months prior to the actual contest, Lloyd George himself seems to have been affected with the misgivings which prevailed in regard to the probable re-

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sult even among the strongest of his supporters. "Even if I were thrown out," he confided to an interviewer, "it would not be such a dreadful thing. Parliamentary life is not such an enjoyable position as all that."

With the first clash of controversy, however, he "turned to his course as the horse rusheth into the battle." The momentary misgiving vanished before his inbred lust for battle. "The struggle," he assured his supporters, "will be a severe one, but, personally, I do not mind that."

He based his appeal to the constituency for a renewal of its trust, not merely on the score of his Parliamentary record of five years, with its outstanding assiduity in promoting the distinctive interests of Wales—an assiduity which not even the most relentless of his opponents attempted to gainsay—but on the special services which he would be able to render in the immediate future. In view of the general expectation of the return of the Conservatives to power, he took occasion to remind the electors that Mr. Balfour had referred to the Welsh people in disparaging terms and had flung at them the contemptuous words *de minimis non*. "If I am returned to Parliament," declared Lloyd George, "I will undertake to be a thorn in Mr. Balfour's side. I will bring Wales continually under his notice until he is compelled to give us something if only for the sake of peace. If I have been sometimes rather troublesome to a Liberal Ministry in the cause of Wales, I will be a hundred times more so to a Tory Government."

Not in vain was the appeal made, for the returns of the ballot box marked Lloyd George as the victor

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for the third time. "If he had only retained the seat by a single vote," declared the *Manchester Guardian* on the morrow of the triumph, "it would have been an achievement of which, under the circumstances, any candidate might have been proud." But he retained it, not by one vote, but by no less than 194, or only two votes below his majority at the General Election of 1892. Lloyd George rightly emphasised the special significance of this victory in such difficult and untoward circumstances. "The reactionary tide," he declared with exultation, "which has swept over England has dashed in vain against the rocks of the Eryri. We have reason to congratulate ourselves not only because we have been victorious, but also upon the fact that ours is almost the only constituency in the country where a Liberal majority has been maintained unimpaired."

Once more courage had carried him to a great triumph.

The advent of the Conservative Party to power at the General Election of 1895 furnished Lloyd George with a new perspective for a general survey of the political situation. It was impossible to minimise the significance of the disaster to the Liberal Party, marked as it was by the sensational defeat of leaders like Sir William Harcourt and John Morley. A rout so overwhelming was not to be explained away as some phenomenon utterly unrelated to the exigencies of the opposing parties.

Lloyd George found no difficulty in accounting for the real cause, which he described as the unreasoning

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fear of "the predominant partner" in regard to the possible dangers of giving Ireland the right of self-government. Unionist spokesmen had succeeded in permeating the English electorate with the fear that Home Rule for Ireland would inevitably lead to the dismemberment of the British Empire. Lloyd George urged that this fear should be allayed by the substitution of a policy of Home Rule All Round as the main item in the Liberal programme, inasmuch as public feeling in favour of a federal system of government would ripen with such rapidity that it would provide the much-needed solution of the Irish problem.

Tactical considerations made it imperative that he should in the first instance, thaw the distrust of the Irish Members and so secure their assent, and to that end he directed his full strength.

"Last night," he wrote to his brother, "I interviewed Dillon and this morning Healy. I arranged matters all right—striking out or altering such parts of the resolution as they objected to—nothing important. As a matter of fact, I struck out one sentence which I had introduced purposely to assuage them." Having thus forged into definite shape a practical resolution which embodied the gist of his proposals, he convened a meeting of the Liberal Members of Parliament with a view to its adoption as the formulated policy of the Party as a whole.

"From what I have been able to discern," he informed an interviewer, "I am strongly inclined to believe that some such policy as I have outlined in my Federal proposals would be accepted by the Liberal leaders, provided a little pressure were brought to

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bear upon them from the outside. Some of them, I know, would be only too glad to see the country take up the question in earnest and modify the Home Rule attitude in the direction I have indicated. As for the rank and file of the Party, this solution of the Home Rule problem would be heartily welcomed."

His sanguine anticipations were soon discounted by the active opposition of a small coterie among the Liberal Members. "The rascals," wrote Lloyd George to his brother, "are doing their best to poison the Press against us." Their machinations succeeded, for the meeting proved to be so fissiparous in tendency that it was deemed prudent to commit it to no definite proposal of any kind, while the Liberal Press—to quote from the editorial comment of the *Saturday Review*—"united next day in belittling the gathering as an abortive and meaningless affair."

Early in the session of 1896, the Government introduced an Agricultural Rating Bill, the main object of which was to grant financial relief to the agricultural industry. By reason of the fact that the firm of solicitors, with whom Lloyd George had served his articles, specialised in all matters affecting agricultural interests, he had been able to gain an insight into the intricacies of agricultural rating; and, consequently, he was fully equipped for the occasion provided by the introduction of such a measure.

On the second reading of the Bill he delivered a speech which was afterwards described by a Parliamentary pressman as "logical in arrangement, complete in argument, earnest in spirit and literally coruscating with effective points."

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The speech marked—to quote Lloyd George's own phrase in a descriptive account to his brother—"the greatest hit" in his Parliamentary career. "House in a ferment," continued the letter, "congratulations showered on all sides. There may not be much in the descriptive columns of the papers, for the reporters have boycotted the debate, but the Front Opposition Bench was full, and Morley, Asquith and the whole lot of them were delighted."

Lloyd George added to his laurels when the Bill reached its Committee stage. During the whole of that period he was always to be found in his corner seat. He listened to every speech, marked every changing phase of the situation, and directed his manœuvres accordingly. He spun out amendments to the Bill with such amazing ingenuity and unfailing resourcefulness that he became regarded, in the words of a leading journal, as "the unofficial leader of the Opposition," and "the most able of the critics of the Bill." The undaunted vigour of the fight captivated the interest of all parties. "Everyone marvels," wrote an eye-witness in the Press Gallery, "at the endurance which Mr. Lloyd George shows in keeping up the debate for nearly ten hours at a stretch. Odds are being freely laid that he must break down before the last clause of the Bill is reached." Parliamentarians vied with the Press in paying tribute to his adroitness and his wonderful staying powers. "Mr. Lloyd George in Committee," wrote one of his Parliamentary colleagues, "reminds me of the very amusing description given by Mr. Stead of the mouse that made his nights a torture when he was a first-

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class misdemeanant in Holloway Gaol. The moment the Speaker has left the Chair Mr. Lloyd George begins his work, and he keeps on, nibble, nibble, nibbling the whole night long, with such a monotonous pertinacity of ingenious criticism as suffices to drive a long-suffering Minister into a state of despair. Then if he is ever caught—but this does not often happen—Mr. Lloyd George puts on a look so child-like and bland that no one has the heart to say an unkind word to him.”

The Agricultural Rating Bill, having survived the perils of its Committee stage, came before the House for its third reading; and in the course of a speech on that occasion Sir William Harcourt, speaking in his capacity as the leader of the Opposition, took the opportunity of making a eulogistic reference to Mr. Lloyd George, “whose eminent services with regard to this Bill will be recognised by the House.” Naturally, this compliment gave him great gratification. “This is a most unusual thing for a leader to do—to single out one of the men who have fought, for special allusion,” he wrote home to Criccieth the same evening. “Sir William Harcourt’s pointed compliment to Mr. Lloyd George,” observed a London journal on the following day, “was certainly well deserved. It is doubtful if a private Member has ever done greater service to his Party in Parliament. He started this session a little suspect with the majority of Liberals, but it is generally recognized now that, primarily on the Rating Bill, but also on the Education Bill, no words of praise could be too strong for what Mr. Lloyd George has done.”

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The value of this tribute is all the greater when it is remembered that the same newspaper, in a review of the session, had pronounced it "a difficult year for any orator to make his mark," for the new Parliament represented "the child of national exhaustion, of a self-protective cynicism, of class interests." It is therefore not without significance that it was in such a session, when the omens were obviously unpropitious and the strategic elements scarce, that Lloyd George succeeded in establishing a reputation as a gifted Parliamentarian and a brilliant debater. "It is so lucky," he wrote to his brother as the contest over the Rating Bill was drawing to its close, "that this has turned out to be the Bill of the session." His modesty ascribed to the caprice of circumstance a result which was almost exclusively due to his personal prowess, for it was not so much luck as pluck that secured for him out of the arid clauses of a Rating Bill the satisfaction of a personal triumph and of an enhanced prestige. The Rating Bill gave Lloyd George his opportunity, and he grasped it.

Gratifying as such tributes must have been to a young politician of a highly sensitive temperament, he had the satisfaction of knowing that they had their counterpart in the judgment and attitude of his own leaders. The commanding place which he had won for himself in the House of Commons secured for him the compliment of an invitation from Lord Rosebery to meet at dinner a number of ex-Cabinet Ministers with a view of taking counsel upon the policy and prospects of the Liberal Party.

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A leading politician subsequently testified that, when the Scottish Rating Bill was under discussion in the Commons in the summer of 1896, he spent a week-end with Sir William Harcourt at his country house in the New Forest, for the purpose of considering the amendments to the Bill as tabled by the Scottish Members. After a careful perusal of these amendments, the Liberal leader exclaimed in a tone of impatience: "All the Scotch Members put together are not worth Lloyd George's little finger for a real fight."

Sir William Harcourt's interest in the young Welsh Member assumed a more practical and serviceable form than that of a largess of handsome compliments. He urged him, in private, to prepare himself for the responsibilities of a high place in the next Liberal Ministry. "You are too gifted a man," the veteran leader is said to have remarked, "to fritter away your powers in playing the part of a mere free lance. You are destined for much higher things."

Unquestionably the turning point in Lloyd George's career came at the time of his triumph over the Agricultural Rating Bill. It was then that he came within sight of his Rubicon—and he crossed it. In the expressive phrase of a leading journalist, "the Parnell of Wales became the Chamberlain of England." And England profited at the expense of Wales.

Early in the session the Government introduced a Voluntary Schools Bill. Confessedly framed in the interests of the Church Schools, the measure afforded Mr. Lloyd George full scope for enhancing

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his position and prestige as a Parliamentary. He had gained, from his own personal experience, an intimate knowledge of the inner atmosphere of a typical Church school, and he knew how Nonconformist pupils in such schools were made to feel that they were without the pale. It is therefore easy to understand his vehement opposition to a measure which sought to buttress such schools afresh.

There is nothing that so surely tests the resourcefulness of a Parliamentary as the framing of an effective "Instruction" to a Bill which is about to enter upon its committee stage. The strategic value of an Instruction is obvious when it is remembered that it not only retards the progress of a measure, but it also affords vantage ground for a flanking movement which may prove more damaging than the frontal attack of a second reading debate. But the task is not easy. It necessitates highly developed skill in Parliamentary warfare, and a thorough knowledge both of tactics and of the intricacies of Parliamentary procedure. Not only must the weak spot in the fabric of the Bill be unerringly located, but the utmost wiliness must be exercised in eluding the vigilance and challenge of the Chair.

It was inevitable that a highly controversial measure like the Voluntary Schools Bill should provoke a number of Instructions from the Liberal benches; but out of all that were tabled, only one survived the rigorous censorship of the Chair. "Great triumph for Lloyd George," wrote one of the shrewdest of Parliamentary observers¹; "another step in suc-

¹"Toby, M.P.," in *Punch*.

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cessful Parliamentary career achieved by sheer ability, lived up to with unvaried modesty. To frame Instruction on going into Committee has always been, for technical reason, work of great difficulty. To-night six Parliamentary hands essayed it with respect to Education Bill. The youngest alone accomplished it."

Although the Instruction was defeated by a majority of 136 votes in a Division in which 404 Members took part, Lloyd George had the satisfaction of having initiated a debate which greatly embarrassed the Government and seriously menaced the existence of the Bill; and he followed up this tactical advantage by moving in Committee a number of amendments marked by an ingenuity and skill which not only ensured their ready acceptance by the Chair, but reflected in a special degree the characteristic traits of a gifted Parliamentarian.

In all political parties there are men who may be depended upon to support all and every proposal which emanates from their own particular side of the House. Such men are a delight in the eyes of the Whips, who have little use and small welcome for independence of thought or of action.

Lloyd George had been a good Party man without being subservient. His extreme views had been so modified as to bring his actions into line with practical politics, but he had never sacrificed his innate independence by following a course which, while it might lead to paths of pleasantness and peace, was directly opposed to his own inner consciousness. That he would, when occasion offered, fight as keenly

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against his friends as he was accustomed to do against his political opponents was demonstrated not infrequently, but never more so than in the beginning of the session of '98.

Among the amendments to the Address was one moved by Mr. John Dillon¹ in support of the Irish demand for a Catholic University in Ireland. This amendment was supported in a powerful speech by no less distinguished a statesman than John Morley; and in view of the large number of Members who were known to be sympathetic to the suggestion, it was anticipated, both in the Press and in Parliament, that the proposal would secure a large following in the division lobby. But the prophets had not reckoned with Lloyd George, who, in a speech vehement in its untempered outspokenness, opposed the amendment in the most uncompromising fashion. He admitted at the outset that it was the first occasion on which he felt constrained to vote against the wishes of the Irish Members on an Irish question, but he refused to concede that adherence to the principle of Irish Home Rule carried with it a committal to every movement supported by the representatives of Ireland. He claimed that the mere fact that Liberals were prepared to confer the fullest powers on Ireland ought not to preclude them from looking into the merits of every Irish proposal brought before the House of Commons.

Dealing with the special considerations urged in support of the plea for a Catholic University in Ire-

¹At that time Mr. Dillon was the official leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party.

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land—namely, the poverty of the country and the preponderance of its Catholic population—Lloyd George contended that it was quite possible to meet those circumstances without setting up a Catholic University on Irish soil. There ought to be no difficulty in establishing in Ireland a University which any clever boy, however poor, could enter and in which the Catholic creed would be in a position of equality with every other creed. “But it is evident,” he added, in a tone of reproach, as he turned to face the phalanx of the Irish Members, “that there must be something more than that behind this demand. The real object of the proposal must be to set up a University, Catholic in tone, Catholic in atmosphere; and we Nonconformists are determined to oppose the creation of such an institution no matter from what side of the House the proposal comes.” Casting his eye in the direction of the Front Opposition Bench, Lloyd George confessed, to the undisguised amusement of the Conservatives, that he had grave misgivings regarding his own leaders. “My right honourable friend, who has written a most uncompromising essay on ‘Compromise’,” he continued in scornful tone as he pointed his finger at John Morley, “has been trampling upon his own philosophy in every sentence of the speech which he has just delivered.” Then in the sternest of words he proceeded to warn his leaders that if they committed themselves to such a proposal, without reference to the convictions of their followers, they would wreck the Party.

The warning had its effect. The men on the fence hurried down on the opposition side, and even the

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leaders became dubious, with the result that Dillon, denied the necessary permission for the formal withdrawal of his motion, had to suffer the mortification of seeing it "negatived without a division." The moral of the incident was rightly interpreted the next morning by a leading newspaper in its comment that "so unexpected a result was primarily due to the courageousness of Lloyd George's attitude."

This boldness of action had its aftermath in an estrangement between the Irish Members and himself, and, although he sat on the bench immediately below them, the narrow dividing line became as an impassable gulf, and the friendly relationships of former days were entirely suspended. This feeling continued to smoulder right through the session, and it flamed forth afresh when, in the summer of 1898, the Irish Local Government Bill made its appearance, as a Government measure, on the floor of the House of Commons. For the most part, such hostile criticism as was forthcoming was levelled at its financial clauses; and it is of interest to note the testimony of the *Westminster Gazette* that the attack was left "in the main to Mr. Lloyd George and the private Member."

Lloyd George openly avowed that his opposition was begotten of the fact that the Irish landowners would profit, under the provisions of the Bill, to the extent of £300,000. In his eagerness to wean the Irish Members from their open friendliness to the measure, he took occasion to remind them that even such advantages as were being secured by the Bill for their rural districts were, as a matter of fact, being

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purchased at the expense of their towns; whereupon one of the Irish Members, amid the approving cheers of his colleagues, testily exclaimed: "Let us take care of ourselves." In an instant there flashed forth the retort: "Ah! that's your policy, is it? Then let me tell you," he continued, "it is time that British Members were beginning to take care of themselves."

In the month of May Mr. Gladstone passed away. Although four years had elapsed since the illustrious statesman had taken final leave of his place in the House of Commons, the glamour of his personality had in no way abated. And his death marked not only the close of a great career, but the making of a great gap like unto that which is made in the forest by the fall of the greatest of its oaks. In a striking tribute to the great statesman's memory, which appeared in the pages of *Young Wales*, Lloyd George recalled, in vivid fashion, some of his memorable feats in the Parliamentary arena:

"Mr. Gladstone's conducting through the House of Commons of the Home Rule Bill of 1893 is regarded as the most marvellous display of Parliamentary skill and endurance ever witnessed in any assembly. The first thing done by every visitor to the gallery of the House of Commons during the progress of the great debates in Committee on that Bill was regularly to scan the Treasury Bench to view the man whose dialectical achievements were the wonder of the hour. How disappointed he must have felt at seeing nothing but a shrunken figure lying huddled up and torpid, apparently in the last stage of senile exhaustion! There was no movement in the pallid and drawn face

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to indicate consciousness of the environment as the debate dragged wearily along. At last, an alert, trim figure from one of the back benches above the gangway would rise, and with metallic voice and clear enunciation he would commence a caustic criticism of the clause under consideration. The speech was a prolonged gibe, always more or less directed at the prime author of the Home Rule Bill. For a few minutes, nevertheless, the recumbent figure on the Treasury Bench showed no revived interest in his surroundings. Then a sneer, more bitter than the rest, levelled with a hissing vehemence, produced a sudden change. A quick spasm of anger passed over the worn features, the eyes opened, there was a dart at any convenient piece of notepaper lying on the table in front, a hasty scribbling of a note, and the slumbering statesman was awake and attentive. It was evident that not a sentence of the acid series now passed unheeded. The moment Mr. Chamberlain sat down, amid the triumphant plaudits of his friends, up sprang the devoted object of all this biting invective, with a nimbleness that startled the uninitiated. The shrivelled frame became instantly transformed. The shoulders were thrown back, the chest, heaving with passion, bulged forward, the eye flashed fire, and there stood before you an erect athletic gladiator fit for the contest of any arena. To describe the speech surpasses my powers. The voice sonorous and clear as a bell, piercing in accent, rich and deep as the sound of the surf breaking on the shore. I have never heard its like. The expression of the nimble face, every muscle of which seemed to have been

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drilled in the practice of conveying all phases and shades of subtlest meaning; the action, unsurpassed in appropriateness, grace and power. All these live in the memory but elude description. Every art of his resourceful rhetoric was exerted to confound and crush his relentless adversary. Who that saw it can forget the inimitable comedy of the gesture with which he accompanied his allusions to the innumerable quotations from his opponent's former speeches which Mr. Chamberlain had always at his command? How friend and foe alike were convulsed with mirth as he derisively slapped his coat-tails, saying, 'Oh, but he has a quotation in his pocket.' Then there was the blighting scorn with which he mocked his assailant's claim to a monopoly of consistency. I recollect that the speech which I have more particularly in my mind was delivered during the dinner hour. For all that, not a Member left his seat until the orator sat down. Then the Chairman adjourned 'for his chop,' and the Members rushed in excited groups to the dining-rooms to talk over the latest exhibition of the 'Old Man's' oratorical prowess. I sat next to a brilliant Tory who was quite fascinated with the performance. What specially struck him was the exquisite acting displayed in its delivery. He had heard, he told me, the first actors in Europe and in America, and, whether in tragedy or in comedy, he thought Mr. Gladstone excelled them all."

X
THE BOER WAR



CHAPTER X

THE BOER WAR

IN the opening days of the year 1899, Mr. Balfour was dining one evening with a small company of his political associates. Amid the amenities of the table, the conversation embarked upon a speculation in regard to the coming man on the Liberal benches. One name after another was suggested, but each was in turn discarded as obviously being without the Marshal's baton in his knapsack. Mr. Balfour listened in silence to the various observations, but, with the exhausting of the suggested names, he shook his head as he remarked: "You have all missed the most promising man of the lot. In my opinion, *the* coming man on the other side is that young Welsh Member—Lloyd George."

In the autumn of 1899 there appeared on the horizon of South Africa a cloud which caused unconcealed misgiving to such as had eyes to see. Then suddenly the storm burst and Great Britain found itself in the throes of a grim war. At that time Lloyd George was away in Canada on a much-needed holiday. "The news from the Transvaal threatens to alter my arrangements," he had written home as soon as the first rumblings of the storm had reached him. "War," he added, "means the summoning of Parlia-

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ment. The prospect oppresses me with a deep sense of horror. If I have the courage, I shall protest with all the vehemence at my command against the outrage which is perpetrated in the name of human freedom."

Forthwith he hurried back home to give instant and vehement utterance to his protest. "Why do I object to War?" he exclaimed in the opening sentence of the first speech which he made on his return. "It is," he proceeded to say, as he set himself to reply to his own interrogatory, "because I know of nothing that arrests progress like war. I have come to the conclusion that I would be recreant before God and man if at this opportunity I did not enter a protest against what I consider to be an infamy. And here I do it to-night," he exclaimed, with flashing eye and with up-lifted hand, "even if I leave this town to-morrow without a friend."

There was nothing which he resented so keenly as the taunts of disloyal and traitorous conduct which his opponents were fond of flinging at him by way of retort to his caustic criticisms. "Is every politician who opposes a war during its progress of necessity a traitor?" he inquired on one occasion. "If so, then Chatham was a traitor, and Burke and Fox especially, and in later times Cobden and Bright and even Mr. Chamberlain—all these were traitors."

Unsparing as he was in his criticisms of statesmen he studiously refrained from any strictures on the men who had taken the field. "I am not a military expert," he explained to an interviewer, "and I have always thought it unfair to criticise men who are risk-

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ing their lives in the performance of their duties, unless one is forced to do it for the sake of the honour and the good name and the security of the country."

Although Parliament had reassembled in the month of October (1899) for a special session on account of the war, Lloyd George resolved to keep silence in the House "until next session"—to quote his words—"when all would be sick of the war"; but with Chamberlain's vindication of the conflict, he flung himself into the arena by delivering a trenchant speech in the course of which he came into sharp collision with the great protagonist of the war, whom he openly charged with having deliberately and shamelessly misrepresented the concessions which the Boers had offered to make. He read out to the House the statutory provisions of the Transvaal Act, and proceeded to show that the conditions and difficulties attending the franchise in Britain were much worse than were those imposed in the Transvaal. He denounced the readiness of the British Government to go to war in order to obtain the franchise for the Uitlanders in the Transvaal, "many of whom," he declared in a satiric tone, "are not even natives of this country. We are fighting for 'the full franchise,' for 'pure and honest administration in the Transvaal,'" he continued with a recurring flash of satire, "and this is being done by a Government that has divided three millions among its own supporters, backed by a Chamber composed of landlords who have benefited to the extent of hundreds of thousands—a Chamber for which no British subject has a right to vote."

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Some days later he returned to the attack in a speech which was devoted to a scathing exposure of the conspiracy of a body of financiers to subvert the independence of a small State under the pretext of "equal rights for all"—a pretext which he tore to shreds as he proceeded to point out that the wages earned by miners in the Transvaal were four times as high as the wages earned by miners in this country, while an eight-hour day for miners—which the British House of Commons had so airily discountenanced—was provided for in the enactments of the Transvaal Government. "I should have thought," he said, "that the greatest pride of the Uitlanders would have been to take part in this conflict and fight for their supposed rights. But how many have availed themselves of the privilege? They prefer to lounge about the hotels of Cape Town, while English homes are being made desolate on their behalf. I am sure that I shall carry the House with me when I declare that such men and their grievances are not worth one drop of British blood."

Although the whole trend of the speech was in manifest opposition to the sentiments of the great majority of the members, it profoundly affected the House as a whole; its eloquence touched men who had been left unmoved by the force of his contentions. Immediately on the conclusion of the speech Sir William Harcourt scribbled his congratulations on the back of an envelope, which he passed on to the young orator: "Magnificent! You have delivered a speech which would have been worthy of Grattan at his best"; while Mr. Balfour confessed to a friend that, intensely as he

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disagreed with it, he felt bound to admit that it was the best debating speech he had ever heard in the Commons.

In the course of the summer following the outbreak of the war a dramatic announcement was made by the Colonial Office that in the enemy's archives at Bloemfontein there had been found a number of sympathetic letters from Members of Parliament in this country which had been addressed to the President of the Orange Free State and other Boer leaders. Naturally the statements created a great sensation throughout the country, and the public interest was intensified by the withholding of the contents of the letters and of the names of their authors. This air of mystery inevitably gave rise to all kinds of damaging rumours, and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain was strongly criticised in Parliament for his action in not publishing the letters and giving their authors an opportunity for either explanation or defence. The most severe of his critics was Lloyd George, who in a vehement speech denounced him for having, by such action, placed every Member of Parliament opposed to the war under a suspicion of being engaged in a treasonable conspiracy. Chamberlain retorted that immediately the letters had come into his possession he had written to their authors for an explanation, and, he added, as soon as their replies were forthcoming, the Government would come to a decision in regard to the publication of the correspondence. Thereupon, Lloyd George sprang to his feet—keen, agile, combative. Sweeping aside Mr. Chamberlain's explanation, he exclaimed: "You were right to send copies of the

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letters to their writers, but why did you anticipate this by giving the House a hint of their contents? You give the meaning, but you take care to withhold the substance."

Mr. Chamberlain perceptibly winced under the blow. "I gave it," he interjected, "in order to remove exaggerated accounts of their contents." Lloyd George turned on him with renewed fierceness: "Whence had such accounts come? How could they have got into the Press without the connivance of the Colonial Government? Why had they been wired from South Africa? What about the censorship?" These implicating questions were fired in quick succession at Mr. Chamberlain as he twisted and turned on the Treasury Bench in obvious discomfort. "War news, dispatches, and letters from the front," continued Lloyd George, his voice vibrating with indignation, "have been withheld by the Government, but as soon as they get hold of something which they deem discreditable to their political antagonists they hasten to telegraph and to publish it. Is this a fair way to treat a minority? It is difficult enough to oppose a war," he added, "but is it well to make it so difficult to oppose bloodshed?" The Member for Carnarvon was not content to frame interrogatories to which no replies might be forthcoming. "Was this the course of a gentleman?" he continued, pointing an accusing finger at Chamberlain. "I venture to say that no other Member on that side of the House would have done such a thing."

With a daring bit of strategy he now forced Chamberlain himself into a defensive position. Late on

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the previous night there had been issued the report of the Special Committee which had been inquiring into the question of the War Office Contracts, on account of certain allegations that the War Office had shown preferential treatment to the Birmingham firm of Kynoch. Although there had been little opportunity for the Members to peruse its contents, Lloyd George, in his eagerness to profit by its information, sacrificed some hours' sleep to its perusal, with the result that, when the House met on the following day, he had thoroughly mastered its details. Quick to mark the seriousness of certain of its admissions, he now turned them into effective missiles wherewith to attack Mr. Chamberlain. As the scope of the debate would not permit him to raise the issue of the War Office acceptance of the Kynoch contract, he passed on to a general discussion of the dynamite scandals in the Transvaal. "You talk about corruption in the Transvaal, 6,000 miles away, about a dynamite monopoly and Kruger's aid to his relatives! Is it not time," he exclaimed as he flung a scornful glance at Mr. Chamberlain, "that we looked at home?" The virulence of the attack was now fully reflected in Mr. Chamberlain's attitude. The face lost its wonted impassiveness. The legs were no longer crossed nor the arms folded in the familiar nonchalant manner. Obviously his traditional imperviousness was pierced and torn asunder by his young assailant. His eyes flashed with anger and he sat in crouching fashion, ready to spring on his assailant at the slightest chance. Again and again he resorted to interruption when, for instance, Lloyd George had referred to

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Kynoch's as "a new firm," Mr. Chamberlain interjected, "It has been in existence twenty years." A smile flitted across Lloyd George's countenance at this interruption for which he had so skillfully angled, and he quietly retorted, "Yes, it has been nominally in existence for twenty years, but it has really been made since certain gentlemen from Birmingham have had influence at the War Office." A minute later, there was another fierce passage of arms as Lloyd George proceeded to quote from the Report of the Contracts Committee. "Here we proceed by innuendo," he casually remarked in reference to the quotation. Eagerly Mr. Chamberlain fastened upon the admission. "Hear, hear!" he cried with unmistakable satisfaction; while the Conservative Members, catching from the triumphant inflection of his voice the implication that the attack in the main consisted of innuendoes, quickly took up the cry and repeated it. "Quite so," Lloyd George smilingly observed, "innuendoes such as the right honourable gentleman makes against Liberals over those South African letters. We adopt his methods; we are fighting him with his own weapons. We are meeting innuendo with innuendo."

Again and again Lloyd George hit out vigorously, encouraged by the enthusiastic cheers of his party; but the moment he sat down Chamberlain sprang to his feet. Pale with anger, he charged his opponent with having attacked him under cover of an innuendo that he was in some way or other connected with the commercial interests of his brother who was at the head of Kynoch's. Up jumped Lloyd George. "I never said so," he called out above the clash of

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voices. Chamberlain refused to give way, to enable his opponent to make a personal explanation, and the younger man remained standing in stern and open defiance. Excited cries of "Order!" raged around them as they faced one another; and then the Speaker decided in favour of Chamberlain. Lloyd George pointed out that the Colonial Secretary was speaking for the second time, and that only with the indulgence of the House; "and if he misrepresents what I have said," he added, "I am surely entitled to make a personal explanation."

But Chamberlain proceeded in a few biting, scornful sentences to repudiate the insinuation that he was in any way associated with the firm of Kynoch. "Let me say now," he exclaimed, "that I have never interfered by a single word with my brother's private affairs any more than he has interfered with my public interests. And I call it a gross abuse of the privilege of this House to attack a public man through his relatives for whom he is not responsible." Then, to the accompaniment of a great cheer from the Conservative benches, Chamberlain resumed his seat.

No one rose. Lloyd George, flushed with the exertion, and still more with the excitement of the occasion, was content to remain seated in his corner seat. The Speaker rose to put the question, and then the Members trooped into the Lobby to discuss the dramatic scene which they had just witnessed. With unaffected pleasure Liberal Members acclaimed Lloyd George as the hero of the occasion, while even the Conservative members were found ready to admit that "Joe had found his match at last."

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Early in 1900 Lloyd George was the chief speaker at Glasgow at a meeting of citizens opposed to the war policy of the Government. The object of this meeting was keenly resented, and an angry mob congregated around the building and sought to force an entrance. A large body of University students attempted to rush the stairway, and the police had to be requisitioned to assist the stewards, who were being overpowered. It was amid the din and hubbub of such scenes that Mr. Lloyd George rose to speak. "He had to stand for many minutes before the noise quieted down," to quote from one who was present on that occasion,¹ "but the self-restraint of the peace men, and the cutting off of the outside mob, and Mr. Lloyd George's good-humoured patience at last secured comparative quiet, and he got in a few sentences. Once started, he behaved in the most skilful way. Humouring the rowdies, parrying smartly, and speaking eloquently, he at last got complete control, which he held for about forty-five minutes, making a fine speech, which was concluded amidst thunders of applause."

Trying as such violence was, Lloyd George had to undergo the far severer ordeal of hearing from his own constituency the unmistakable note of bitter resentment, and of seeing men who had been zealous in the promotion of his interests hang back in sullen disapproval of his actions. Disconcerted as he well might be, he was eager to justify his course of action, and the measure of his courage may be inferred from his

¹Mr. Cornwright Schreiner, in his book entitled "The Land of Free Speech."

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decision to address a meeting at Bangor which was the one district in his constituency where his supporters were known to be in a minority even in normal times. Even the most doughty of the Liberal stalwarts were perturbed by this decision, and he was strongly urged, for the sake of the Party as well as for his own, to abandon his intention. But their timid-stricken counsels failed to move him. "I am going to Bangor," he wrote to his brother at this time. "I mean to insist upon it, although I hear that the bulk of the leading Liberals are strongly opposed to a meeting at this juncture, and they entreat me not to go. I will not listen to them. If the policy of abstaining from meetings to instruct the people is adhered to, judgment will go by default against us, and we will be hopelessly beaten—and we deserve to. If the Association still deprecates meetings I resign my candidature, as I cannot hope to succeed if I am shut up."

The trustees of the hall where the meeting was to take place became apprehensive, and demanded a substantial guarantee against all possible damage. This was forthcoming, and the necessary arrangements were proceeded with.

"I mean to get there," he wrote on the eve of the meeting; and he did get there, in full sight of the hostile mob that had congregated around the front entrance. Within the hall Lloyd George had the satisfaction of being faced with an audience mainly composed of his political kinsmen, and although he had to speak to the accompaniment of breaking glass as the stones came hurtling through the windows, he was able for an hour to plead his justification of the

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course he had taken in regard to the war. "Those who had the privilege of listening to Mr. Lloyd George at Bangor," wrote one editor, "will not readily believe that he has ever delivered a speech which, in courage, lucidity, pathos and persuasiveness, excelled his eloquent oration on this occasion. Thick must be the skull, that is impervious to the force of his arguments, and hard must be the heart that does not respond to the pathos of the appeals in favour of peace and conciliation."

An angry mob waited without, and Lloyd George's friends urged him to leave by a back door; but he walked right out into the main road, where he was immediately followed by the crowd. It was only when he was struck on the back of the head with a bludgeon that he realised his danger, and sought shelter in a neighbouring café, where he had to remain, under police protection, until the dispersal of the crowd some time after midnight. Such an experience, occurring as it did within the precincts of his own constituency, was infinitely more nerve-wracking than all the opposition and violence which he encountered elsewhere.

The Bangor episode was as a sweet morsel in the mouth of his political opponents. It made it apparent that he had lost favour even in his own constituency, and they felt certain that the next General Election would mark his rejection at the polls. They were strengthened in their assurance by the fact that even in the outlying parts of the constituency, whence he had hitherto drawn the fullest measure of support, the war fever was at its height. Nevin sent a con-

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gratulatory message to the Queen on the success of the British arms in South Africa; the Town Councillors in the constituent borough of Pwllheli attended the Mafeking celebration in their robes of office; while in every part of the constituency the relief of Ladysmith and of Mafeking was celebrated with the greatest gusto; and at all of these demonstrations Lloyd George was vigourously denounced, and at some of them his effigy was burned.

Corresponding to the elation of his opponents was the dejection of his supporters. Many of them were visibly dismayed, while all were agreed that his chances of retaining the seat rested solely on the hope that the war fever would have spent itself before the next General Election. But the thread of their hopes was snapped by the dissolution of Parliament in the autumn of that year (1900), when the Carnarvon Boroughs were again thrown into the burning crater of a bitter contest.

Feeling among the local Liberals was intense, and when the Executive Committee of the Association met for the purpose of formally adopting Lloyd George as the Liberal candidate, some of the most prominent of its members expressed their intention of insisting upon a modification of his anti-war attitude as the condition of their support. But in the course of the meeting Lloyd George, who had been quietly apprised of the situation, came into the room with a jauntiness of demeanour which took his critics by surprise. Flinging his soft grey hat on the mantelpiece, he turned to face the assembled delegates, and informed them that he had not come there to be criticised or

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even catechised in respect of his attitude to the war. "I want you clearly to understand," he said, "that I shall continue to oppose the war as vehemently as in the past, and if I am not allowed full liberty of action, then it is for you to choose another candidate. I have been asked to stand for other constituencies, and if you are not prepared to accept me on my own terms, choose someone whom you may regard as more likely to retain the seat for Liberalism."

The challenge achieved its purpose. It stifled the menace of carping criticism; for there was not a man in the room who needed to be reminded that it would be impossible for any candidate to wage so strenuous a fight as the hero of their past contests. But even the most loyal of his followers doubted his ability, in the circumstances, to emerge successfully from the arena of the polls. His opponents, on the other hand, were so confident of victory that the special correspondent of the *Times*, after a visit to the constituency, predicted the certainty of the Liberal candidate's defeat.

Such were the conditions amid which Lloyd George embarked upon the hardest contest which even he had known. He found estrangement where before there had been nothing but friendship, and an enervating sullenness where he had been accustomed to look for enthusiastic support.

At his meeting at Nevin, a district in a remote corner of the constituency, he was received, not with the fiery outburst of Cymric enthusiasm to which he had been accustomed, but with a frigidity that was symptomatic of estrangement. Astutely he gauged

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the situation, and at the outset of his speech he sought to thaw the congealed emotions of his audience. "I admit," he declared, "that I may possibly have taken a mistaken view of affairs in South Africa, but in any case I am perfectly honest in that view." Then skilfully he passed under review the record of a Government that had promised old age pensions, houses for the working classes, and the reduction of local taxation. Not a single old age pension, he pointed out, had been granted, and not a single workman's house had been built. But the landowners had benefited, under cover of the Agricultural Rates Act, to the extent of two million pounds a year, while the clergy were given a sum of eighty-seven thousand pounds annually in relief of their rates. "The promise of an old age pension of five shillings a week for old working men," he exclaimed, "has been compounded for a grant of half a crown a week to every parochial parson in the land."

As the audience listened to their candidate discoursing in his trenchant fashion upon the delinquencies of their traditional opponents, their changing demeanour was marked by recurring outbursts of applause. Taking advantage of the change, he proceeded to vindicate his opposition to the war. After expatiating on the causes that had precipitated the war and on the consequent profits made by the firm of Kynoch, he concluded, in thrilling tones: "Five years ago the electors of the Carnarvon Boroughs handed me my strip of blue paper—the certificate of my election—to hand to the Speaker as their duly accredited representative. If I never again represent

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the Carnarvon Boroughs in the House of Commons, I shall at least have the satisfaction of handing back to them that blue paper without any stain of human blood upon it." Thereupon, the sullenness of his audience was swept away, the fervour of former days flamed forth afresh. Once more his courage had been fully vindicated.

The superb fighting qualities which Lloyd George displayed in the course of that contest, the masterly manner in which he exposed the blunders of the Government in respect of the South African War, and more especially, the thrilling note of his appeal wrought a revolution in the feelings of the electorate within the narrow space of a fortnight. But not even the most sanguine of his supporters anticipated such a victory as the ballot boxes disclosed at the close of the day of the poll when Lloyd George was declared the victor by a majority larger than that attained in any previous contest. Of the stirring scenes which followed his magnificent triumph—memorable alike in the annals of the constituency and in the career of Lloyd George—a correspondent contributed to the columns of the *Manchester Guardian* a vivid account.

"It was close upon midnight when the suspense ended and the Mayor stepped out on the balcony of the Town Wall. 'Lloyd George,' he cried, but he could say no more. One mighty shout rose from the multitude beneath. No further word could be heard. Then came delirium. It began with the usual appearance on the balcony, but it did not reach fever pitch until Mr. Lloyd George essayed to reach the Liberal

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Club under the escort of six constables. He might just as well have relied on a set of corks to face the rapids of Niagara. The love of those people was almost terrible; it was certainly dangerous. They closed upon their hero; they wrung his hand till it almost came off; they patted his back until it almost broke; they drowned his protests in their shouts. Manfully the constables fought their way forward; but from above, Mr. George's white hat looked like a little paper boat in a raging sea. And so they brought him to the door of the club, a helpless hero, a conqueror almost slain by his own conquest.

"Then Mr. Lloyd George spoke a few of those brief pregnant sentences which he knows well how to coin: 'While England and Scotland are drunk with blood, the brain of Wales remains clear, and she advances with steady step on the road of progress and liberty.' A mighty shout rose up, such as rose when, in 1895, he cried from the same window that the wave of reaction had broken on the rocks of Snowdonia.

"Then occurred the noblest scene of all. Descending from the balcony, we mounted into a brake, where Mr. Lloyd George could be seen of all and yet be safe from their too perilous attentions. This brake was filled with the untiring lieutenants who had brought Mr. Lloyd George safely through the fight. They advanced slowly down the main street, the crowd with one consent formed up behind in marching column, and as they marched they sang, while every window and doorstep was filled with waving hats and handkerchiefs. It was like the welcome of a king

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returned from his wars. The enemy that was strong at midday had disappeared.

“Seized by a sudden inspiration, Mr. Lloyd George stood upright in the carriage, and so, with lifted hat, he met the multitude face to face with a happy smile. A few months ago they had stoned him, a few weeks ago they were still against him; and now, with silver tongue, he had won back their hearts, and his people were with him again. Surely few men have ever tasted such an hour.”

XI

THE END OF THE BOER WAR

CHAPTER XI

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AS was confidently anticipated, the country readily responded to the appeal of the Government that they should bring the War to a triumphant close. When, therefore, the new Parliament met in December, 1900, the Liberals were still on the Opposition benches.

With the defeat of the Boers in the field the War entered upon a new stage, for the annexation of the two belligerent Republics became the postulate of British statesmanship. Lloyd George strenuously opposed such a policy on the ground that there was no justification for it. Lord Salisbury, he pointed out, had publicly declared, about a month after the outbreak of war, that this country sought neither territories nor goldfields. "What has become of that war?" asked Lloyd George. "It came to an end with the capture of Bloemfontein, when the Boer forces were overthrown, beaten and demoralised. That ended the first war. A sensible Government would then have brought it to an end. All wars are so horrible in their incidents, so uncertain in their events, that sensible statesmen will always, so long as they can achieve the object for which they entered upon war, bring it to an end at the first convenient

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opportunity. The worst of it is that we have no statesman at the head of our affairs, for what did the Government do? Instead of bringing the war to an end, when the Boers were really beaten, they changed the whole purpose of the war. Instead of making it a war to remedy grievances, they suddenly said, 'No shred of independence'—not a *shred*, mind you. Then commenced the second war, a more inglorious, more protracted, more desperate, more disastrous, more costly war, and a war of which no man can foretell the end. Do not forget these two wars," he exclaimed. "I am here to denounce the second."

In the country as in Parliament, Lloyd George attracted attention as the most vehement among the critics of the war. None spoke with such caustic phrases or with such corrosive irony. In his opposition he displayed a persistency that knew no respite and a fierceness that scorned every form of personal risk; and he faced emergencies from which leading politicians instinctively shrank. But the climax of his daring came with his visit to Birmingham in December, 1901.

The visit had been arranged some months earlier, when Lloyd George accepted the invitation of the Birmingham Liberal Association to be the principal speaker at the annual meeting which was to be held towards the close of the year. The intimation of this impending visit threw the Conservative Party in Birmingham into a state of great perturbation. They regarded it as a personal affront to Mr. Chamberlain, of whom they were fanatically proud as their titular head. For that reason they urged resistance at all costs.

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For several days prior to the advertised date of the meeting the correspondence columns of the Birmingham newspapers were littered with direct appeals to violence, and organised disturbance was freely advocated. These were supplemented by editorial comments of an incendiary and pernicious character. In a leading article in one of the Birmingham papers only two days before the meeting, Lloyd George was made the object of a most virulent attack with the undisguised purpose of inciting the populace to fierce resistance. "Mr. Lloyd George," ran the article, "has studiously acquired the reputation of being the most violent pro-Boer in the country. This Welshman has used language respecting the Ministers of his country and the soldiers of the King which, if uttered respecting any Continental Ministry, would have caused him to be arraigned for treason and sentenced to a very considerable term of imprisonment. A hundred years ago in England he would have stood a very excellent chance of losing his head—a feat, which, metaphorically, he performs every time he addresses a public meeting. His particular antipathy has always been towards the Colonial Secretary, and he has described the Member for West Birmingham by every insulting epithet from Judas downwards. Mr. Chamberlain can afford to disregard the personal malice toward himself which instigated the petty clique of the Birmingham Liberal Association to issue their invitation to Mr. Lloyd George, but the mere fact of bringing this 'politician' to Birmingham—the city which has given so nobly and so freely of her sons to fight her battles—to invite

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such a man as Mr. Lloyd George to speak in the Town Hall, is an insult to that city and to every loyal inhabitant."

The Press campaign effected its purpose. Birmingham raged with excitement, and the possibility of serious rioting became a certainty. The Chairman of the Liberal Party deemed it advisable, from considerations of prudence, to withdraw his promise to preside on the occasion, while the officials of the Liberal Association warned Lloyd George of the great risk which he would incur by fulfilling his engagement. His reply was characteristic. He expressed the hope that they would on no account allow themselves to be deterred from holding the meeting by any fear of mob violence. He was equally unmoved by a personal letter from the Chief Constable of Birmingham, who informed him that the situation was one of the gravest danger, and urged the extreme desirability of abandoning the meeting.

When it was thus made clear that the one man who had most cause to fear the threatened violence was the most impervious to the sense of peril, there was no choice other than to proceed with the arrangements; and as hundreds of forged tickets were in circulation, it was found necessary to issue fresh tickets and to intimate that admission would be strictly confined to members of the Liberal Association. It was deemed advisable to issue also a statement by the local Liberal leaders that Lloyd George had indicated to them his intention of dealing with Lord Rosebery's historic speech at Chesterfield. These prudential considerations failed to allay

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the growing excitement in the slightest degree. Blood was heated beyond control, and the mob was bent upon finding relief in unmitigated rowdyism.

Early on the day of the meeting there appeared in the "stop-press" column of one of the newspapers an announcement that Lloyd George would be arriving at New Street Station with the three o'clock train, and consequently a great crowd congregated within the precincts of the station. When the train arrived they found to their chagrin that there was no trace of the man they sought. As a matter of fact, he had arrived with an earlier train and had driven away, in company with his hostess, unnoticed and unmolested. Baulked in their purpose of preventing him from entering the city, the mob congregated around the Town Hall early in the evening in fierce determination to keep him outside the building. This design was likewise out-manœuvred, and the echo of the rousing cheer within the Hall, with which Lloyd George's arrival was greeted, brought home to the mob the humiliating fact that once more they had been outwitted.

As soon as the doors were opened, they were immediately stormed, and all the arrangements for scrutinising the tickets broke down. The stewards were ruthlessly swept off their feet, and in a few minutes the hall was packed with an audience overwhelmingly and dangerously hostile. Pandemonium reigned, and when the Chairman, accompanied by Lloyd George, made his way to the platform, the shouting and yelling increased beyond measure.

After repeated efforts to raise his voice above the deafening din, the Chairman relinquished the at-

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tempt and called upon Lloyd George. His uprising became the signal for a fresh outbreak of ferocious uproariousness. In view of the utter hopelessness of being heard, he contented himself with directing his remarks to the reporters who sat immediately below the platform. "This is rather a lively meeting for a peace meeting," he began, with a touch of humour which could not be suppressed even amid such circumstances. "I have been called an enemy of my country," he proceeded. "Why? Because in common with thousands of others, I have not allowed my judgment to be swept away by the unthinking clamour of the multitude. The real enemies of the country," he exclaimed, with a wave of the hand in the direction of the rioters, "are men who decline to discuss a matter of so much moment to the future of their native land with the calmness and fairness which an intricate problem demands."

Catching sight of the Union Jack flags that were being frantically waved by the riotous elements in the hall, his eye flashed as he said: "The Union Jack is the pride and property of our common country, and no man who really loves it could do anything but dissent from its being converted into Mr. Chamberlain's pocket-handkerchief."

Lloyd George was on his feet for nearly an hour, but he had been able to utter only a few sentences, and these the reporters had the utmost difficulty in catching. One stone after another had come crashing through the windows, and not a few had fallen upon the platform. In time it was evident that there was method behind the madness of the rioters, for at

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a given signal a sudden rush was made for the platform. Immediately a large body of police, who had been waiting in an adjacent corridor, appeared on the scene, and after a severe struggle with the mob as they surged around the reporters' table they succeeded in holding them at bay. Thereupon the Chief Constable made his way to Lloyd George and insisted that he should, in face of the imminence of personal danger, forthwith leave the platform. At first he demurred, but the Chief Constable was obdurate. At last he consented to be led to a place of safety.

Still fiercer was the storm which raged outside the Hall. There the rioters vented their fury on the building, with the result that not a single pane of glass remained unbroken. In the interludes of their violence, they listened to the fiery harangues from impromptu street orators, chief of whom was a prominent member of the City Council, who roused the crowd with the adoption of a resolution, in expression of their confidence in the Government and of pride in Mr. Chamberlain. This was adopted by acclamation and telegraphed to Mr. Chamberlain at his house at Highbury in the following terms: "Lloyd George the traitor was not allowed to say a word. Two hundred thousand citizens and others passed resolutions of confidence in the Government and of admiration for your unique and fearless efforts for king, country and people."

In the meantime Lloyd George had retired to a small room at the rear of the platform, and was quietly smoking a cigar. One of the few who were with him at that moment has been heard to say that, although

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the crash of glass and the savage yells of the mob could be distinctly heard, and although he fully realised what it might mean for him, Lloyd George showed no sign of tremor or of agitation. Only once was he heard to bemoan the significance of the situation. "This is the kind of thing one gets for trying to serve the public," he remarked sadly. "If I had only stuck to my profession and been concerned only with my own interests, I should have been spared such an experience as this."

A mob vies with nature in its most uncontrollable mood. No one realised this more than the Chief Constable of Birmingham, who, though he had had a considerable experience in Ireland during the period of coercion and crime, had yet to confess that he had never seen a crowd so infuriated and so utterly regardless of life or property as that which was then seething within and without the Town Hall. Conscious of his personal responsibility for Lloyd George's safety, he was at his wits' end to know what to do in order to accomplish what he called "the miracle" of his escape from certain violence, when he suddenly remembered that a few months previously the American police had saved President McKinley's assassin from being lynched, by disguising him in a policeman's uniform. The recollection of that incident came with the full force of an inspiration, for he saw in it the only hope of Lloyd George's escape. At first Lloyd George scouted the idea, and it was only when the Chief Constable had pointed out that, already the police were being overpowered, and that not only was his life in absolute danger, but also the lives of the men

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who had loyally stood by him on the platform, that he finally acquiesced in the suggestion. His frock-coat suit was accordingly discarded for the uniform of the force, and he took his place in a procession of police officers whom the Chief Constable had collected. Lloyd George was placed about the middle of the uniformed line as it marched out of the building. But the plan nearly miscarried, for a lynx-eyed sergeant discovered a disparity between the distinguishing numbers on overcoat and tunic, and his suspicions were only allayed by a hurried whisper from a superior officer. Even then the ordeal was by no means over, for, on emerging into the bright glare of the arc lights, Lloyd George was seen by a man in the crowd who recognised him, even in his unfamiliar garb. "There he is—it's the middle chap," shouted the knowing one as he pointed direct at Lloyd George, and for a moment it seemed as though the ruse was destined to miscarry. Fortunately, the crowd was far too excited to heed the exclamations of any individual, and consequently the uniformed politician and his companions were allowed to pass quietly out of the hall.

After Lloyd George had thus succeeded in making his departure, the Chief Constable made his way to the crowd outside and assured them that the man they sought was no longer within the hall. Like ravenous wolves deprived of their prey, their rage thereupon burst all bounds, and they attacked the building with redoubled vigour. Scaffold poles were brought to batter in the doors, and the police were deliberately assaulted, and many of them seriously injured. The

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Chief Constable, in face of this situation, ordered his men to charge with drawn batons; and in the mêlée that followed about forty people were injured, while one man was even killed.

On the day following his escapade, Lloyd George quietly left Birmingham "without so much as a scratch," as he expressed it in the special message which he dispatched to both his wife and uncle.

It was characteristic of Lloyd George's indomitable spirit that, on leaving Birmingham after an experience which would have embittered most men, he was already looking forward to a return visit to the city. In the morning's issue of the *Birmingham Mail* there appeared an editorial assurance that Mr. Lloyd George would never be likely to set foot in their city again. "That is certainly a false prophecy," he remarked to one of his friends who had come to bid him a sympathetic farewell, "for Birmingham shall certainly see me again, and," he added, "next time it will be ready to give me a hearing"—a prediction that was literally fulfilled five years later, when he returned, in the enhanced rôle of Cabinet Minister, to address in peace and triumph a great demonstration in the very hall from which he had been forced to make his strange and perilous retreat.

At the opening of the new session in January, 1902, it was obvious that the conflict in South Africa could not last much longer. The resistance of the Boers had been broken, and already the conditions of peace had become matters for negotiation between the belligerents. It was certain that the close of the war would see a speedy recrudescence of the traditional issues

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of party politics, and for that reason it was important that the Liberal Members should agree to forget past differences and prepare for the resumption of the conflict on the old party lines. Consequently the two sections of the Opposition joined forces on an official amendment to the Address which reflected the very spirit of compromise, and which, it was hoped, would lead the whole of the Liberal Opposition into the same division lobby. This amendment set out that "this House, while prepared to support all proper measures for the effective prosecution of the war in South Africa, is of opinion that the course pursued by your Majesty's Ministers and their attitude with regard to a settlement have not conduced to the early termination of the war and the establishment of a desirable peace." To that amendment, which was moved by a loyal backbencher, John Dillon proposed a further amendment, which sought to omit the words "while prepared to support all proper measures for the effective prosecution of the war in South Africa," and to add to the end of the amendment: "that the systematic devastation of the two South African Republics and the wholesale capture of the women and children of the burghers, and their imprisonment in insanitary camps where insufficient and unsuitable food is supplied, is contrary to the recognised usages of civilised war," and proceeded further to stigmatise such methods of carrying on war as "barbarous." Only nine Liberal Members marched into the same lobby as the Irish Nationalists in support of so sweeping a condemnation: Lloyd George was one of them.

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But he was not content to give a silent vote, albeit a bold one, on a matter that so deeply stirred his feelings. With the disposal of Mr. Dillon's amendment, the House returned to the consideration of the official amendment of the Opposition, and Lloyd George took advantage of the opportunity to emphasise the considerations which debarred him from supporting an amendment so obviously composed of two contradictory propositions. He pointed out that in one breath the sponsors of the amendment declared the war to be unjust, and then they turned to the Government and said: "Unjust though it be, we will support you in prosecuting it." One set of gentlemen had been told that if only they would vote that what they considered was black to be white, another set of gentlemen would vote what they considered was white to be black. "That is not my notion of a compromise," he exclaimed. "My right honourable friend," he continued, as he pointed a reproving finger in the direction of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, "has gained nothing by this amendment. He has been induced to make a declaration after which he cannot be very enthusiastic in his opposition to the war. He has been captured, and it is feared he has been treated by his captors as the Boers treated their prisoners—he has been stripped of all his principles and left on the veldt to find his way back as best he can. I hope that it will be a lesson to him," he remarked in a stern note which evoked deep murmurs of resentment from the Liberal benches.

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"It is a mistake, even if it brings temporary popularity to the party," he boldly declared in the concluding passage of his speech, "to pawn, as it were, the heirlooms of the party in order to buy off unpopularity. At any rate, as long as we face it, we shall have the respect of the country. But on the other hand, if we do adopt the course laid down in the amendment, we shall simply substitute for an unpopularity, which is undeserved as long as it comes from the adhesion to a definite principle, a contempt which will be thoroughly well-merited."

The speech was described by Mr. Balfour, in the course of the debate, as "one of extraordinary conciseness and pungency," and he expressed himself as perfectly certain that no amount of premeditation would have enabled him to accumulate so much bitterness in so short a speech as Lloyd George had contrived to do in the course of his observations.

The speech cost Lloyd George not a little, for while it evoked the admiration of his opponents, it gave great offence to men on his own side. There was not a man in the House of Commons whose speeches on the war elicited such bitter recriminations and angry outbursts on the part of his opponents as his. But he met these ebullitions of enraged feelings with such consummate skill and resourcefulness as ultimately to secure a patient and respectful hearing. On one occasion he indicted the Government with having duped the British public at the time of the General Election in regard to the real state of affairs in South Africa. Under stress of indignation, he described their action as touched with

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the unpleasant flavour of the Panama scandals. "Who is guilty of the falsehood, I know not," he said, "but one thing I do know, and that is that the men who profit by it sit on the Government Bench." Mr. Brodrick, who was then Secretary for War, speaking later in the debate, took occasion to remind him that there was not another assembly in the land that would have listened to such a speech with such patience and consideration as the House had shown. "I fully admit that," exclaimed Mr. Lloyd George with the utmost readiness. "It really is wonderful," he subsequently remarked, "how patient the Tories have been under some of my speeches in the House. I have uttered sentiments which they utterly loathe, and yet they have sat in silence and given me a most respectful hearing."

It may well be questioned, however, whether he had ever delivered a speech that so tried his nerve as the out-spoken criticism of the Liberal amendment, and the stern rebuke to his own leader which lost him temporarily the favour and goodwill of the Party. Nor did the warm reception of the speech from the Conservative benches tend to improve matters, for the cheers of opponents are ever distasteful and serve only to intensify the bitterness that springs from friendships withdrawn.

In the early summer of 1902 peace was proclaimed; the clash of arms ceased to reverberate on the veldt; and the bitter controversies engendered by the conflict died down at Westminster. Amid the débris of their memories none could miss the outstanding paradox that the one politician who had emerged successfully

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from the great ordeal was he who had braved obloquy and faced violence in the fierceness of his opposition. Some years later he referred to the stand which he had made in behalf of a little country, as he put it, six thousand miles away, which he had never seen. "I risked my seat," he declared; "I risked my livelihood, for it was rapidly going from me as the result of my attitude on the war." "You risked your life," ejaculated one man in the audience at the impulse of uncontrollable emotion. "Yes, I risked my life," replied Lloyd George, in a tone which so thrilled his hearers that they leapt to their feet in vociferous and dramatic homage to the memory of his heroism.

The South African War left in its trail battered reputations among those who had loomed largest amid the flare of its fires. In the early stages of the conflict Mr. Joseph Chamberlain had declared his readiness to accept personal responsibility for the conflict as "a feather in his cap." But under stress of the protracted course of the war, with its failures and tragedies, the feather visibly drooped beyond all hope of restoration. The prestige of many in the forefront of operations in the field became tarnished with the smoke of failure, and the illimitable veldt became the graveyard where more than one military reputation was buried.

Of Lloyd George, however, it could be truly said that the close of the war found him in higher repute and with an enhanced prestige in the eyes of the country at large. When the war broke out he was known only as a brilliant Welsh Member who was rapidly winning his way in the House of Commons

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as a young Parliamentarian of great promise. The termination of the war found him recognized as one of the national figures in the country. He had jeopardised personal popularity, self-interest and the prospects of political advancement by loyal and conscientious devotion to an unpopular cause.

He had lost his popularity, to find it later in an enhanced prestige as one of the outstanding figures in the national arena.

XII

THE EDUCATION BILL OF 1902

CHAPTER XII

THE EDUCATION BILL OF 1902

THE wind and the waves," observes Gibbon in one of his luminous sentences, "are always on the side of the ablest navigators." To a man of resolute spirit, difficulties serve only to develop fresh faculties; and even the perversity of circumstances serves to lead him on to the triumph of attainment.

The life of David Lloyd George is a striking illustration of the truth of the adage. In his Parliamentary career, he commenced without influence; he received no favoured treatment; he was time and again at variance with his leaders; he dared to oppose even the great Gladstone himself; he organised revolt among his Welsh colleagues; above all, he incurred the wrath of his party and the odium of his country in his bitter opposition to the South African War. For twelve years he found himself practically out of touch with the main body of Liberalism, and out of sympathy with the prevalent feeling of the country at large. Not for him was the luxury of being on the popular side, nor his the rapturous ease of him who sails with the wind. Constant strain had been the price of his progress and turmoil the unchanging lot of his career.

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However, the turn in wind and tide came in 1902, with the introduction of Mr. Balfour's Education Bill.

When in the operation of the Education Act of 1870 the control of the "British" schools was transferred to School Boards, the clergy of the Anglican Church had declined to surrender *their* schools to public control. Although these National Schools were henceforth accorded increased grants towards the cost of education, they were left dependent upon voluntary subscriptions for the maintenance of the fabric of their buildings.

Notwithstanding their continued freedom to continue instruction in the doctrinal tenets of their Church, the managers of these schools began in time to realise that their victory had been dearly bought, for the gap between the security of rate aid and the fluctuating ratio of voluntary support grew wider with each successive year. The increasing demands on the part of the authorities for improved accommodation and better sanitation served to reveal the yawning discrepancy between the Board schools and the National schools, with the result that dissatisfaction manifested itself. Strong representations were consequently made to the Government to relieve the denominational schools by giving them the same advantage as the Board schools, in the matter of rate aid, while leaving them undisturbed in the full exercise of their facilities for denominational instruction.

It is not difficult to understand Mr. Balfour's readiness to turn a sympathetic ear to such an appeal. He was linked by the closest ties of kinship with the

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most fervid of the protagonists of denominational schools; and this doubtless led him to reopen a controversy which after the bitter memories of 1870 had been instinctively avoided. "The Education Bill," wrote Mr. John Bright to Mr. Gladstone in 1871, "has pleased the Church, but the Church will not maintain the Government. The Bill has done a tremendous amount of mischief to the Party, and I am not sure that the exasperation felt by earnest Dissenters will not bear evil fruit."

Chief among those Dissenters was Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. In his antipathy to State aid for sectarian teaching he had instituted the National Education League for the purpose of organising opposition to the Government proposals. That crusade brought him into contact with the prominent Nonconformist leaders of that day, and he had ample opportunities for noting how deep-rooted was their abhorrence to denominational propagandism in State schools.

The deep impressions then made on Mr. Chamberlain's mind were never obliterated, for when in later years the fortunes of the Conservative party were at their lowest ebb, and he was approached by a coterie with the offer of the leadership, he turned a deaf ear to their pleadings, basing his refusal on the fact that he was not a Churchman and therefore could not claim the qualification essential for the effective leadership of the Conservative Party. He informed the deputation that, when he learnt early in 1902 of pressure being brought to bear on Mr. Balfour to introduce legislation to secure rate aid for sectarian schools, he strove hard to dissuade him

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from acquiescing, warning him that such legislation would have the immediate effect of alienating thousands of English Nonconformists who had hitherto voted Conservative. “‘You don’t know the Nonconformists,’ were my words to Mr. Balfour,” continued Mr. Chamberlain, “‘but I do.’” The warning was unheeded, and in March, 1902, Mr. Balfour introduced his Bill for the avowed purpose of placing all voluntary schools upon a basis of rate aid.

With his customary alertness Lloyd George at once saw the strategic possibilities of the situation. He knew the Nonconformists even better than Chamberlain. He was in closer touch with them than Chamberlain had ever been; and from the fulness of personal experience he had learnt where to look for the festering grievances of the Nonconformists in educational matters.

The main body of Liberal Members based their opposition to the new Bill on the sound political principle that public control should invariably accompany the expenditure of public money. Lloyd George went farther. His attitude rested on deeper considerations. He saw in the Bill the perpetuation, even the aggravation, of the harshest of grievances which had long harassed the Nonconformists, and at the first opportunity he made fierce onslaught on the measure. It came with the second reading, when he delivered a speech which according to one of the leading weekly reviews, “danced with passion, satire and raillery.”

At the outset he set himself to present the Nonconformist case against the principle of the Bill.

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He countered the assertion that there was no proselytising by quoting the words of a Diocesan Inspector who ended an explanation of his methods with the statement that "we are thus training the children of the Nonconformists to be children of the Church." He set forth the relative position of elementary and Church schools and pointed out that of the two million pupils in the latter, one-half of them were Nonconformists, who "however well behaved, able, and bright they might be, would not be allowed to become teachers in the National schools unless they consented to attend the services of the Anglican Church." He enumerated the many privileges of the Church in return for which "she gives £650,000 a year as against £4,000,000 from the State." "But," he continued, "the maintenance of her schools is now to be thrown entirely on the rates, they have simply to keep the schools in repairs. They are grumbling even at that, and I see that the Duke of Northumberland has recently written a letter complaining about it. The total cost of repairs would probably amount to £60,000 a year, which means about one-tenth of a farthing a week for every adherent of the Church—a fifth of the widow's mite—and already the dukes are grumbling at it. There is no coin in the realm sufficiently trifling and insignificant to mark the maximum of sacrifice which these fierce religious zealots are prepared to make for their faith."

The speech would be memorable even if it rested only on its peroration, in which its dialectical force reached the culminating point. The Irish Members were supporting the Bill, and Lloyd George, in con-

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cluding, turned to them, and in the tenderest of tones addressed a personal appeal to them.

"We are in a minority," he proceeded to observe, "for one reason and one reason only, and I am not ashamed of it. It is because we committed ourselves to the cause of Ireland. In 1886 we threw over our most cherished leaders in this country, Spurgeon and Bright, Dr. Allon, Dr. Dale, and even the right honourable gentleman the Member for West Birmingham (Mr. Chamberlain). We threw them over for one reason only; we realised what was due to Ireland. It is rather hard, I think," he proceeded, in a softened tone, "to be put in this plight of being beaten down for the cause of Ireland, and that Irishmen, of all people, should help our foes and theirs to make our defeat the more intolerable. Let them remember this; the people who will benefit by this Bill are the people who coerced Ireland and supported every measure for throwing their leaders into prison. In Wales we were offered, by the Member for West Birmingham, Disestablishment if we would throw over Home Rule. We did not do it, and some of the men who declined to do it will be sold up for rates under this Bill, and probably imprisoned under the mandamus of this Bill. They will remember," he added, pointing with outstretched finger reprovingly in the direction of the Irish benches, "they will remember that the instrument under which that happened was forged partly by the Irish Members. Even the chiefs of their own Church have not been as good friends as the chiefs of Nonconformity. Cardinal Vaughan, a priest of their own Church, passes them

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by when they are fallen on the roadside. I am not sure that he did not join in helping their assailants. But the Nonconformist Samaritans, from the Catholic point of view, who are distant as the poles in their religious views, declined absolutely to listen to the appeals of religious bigotry, and helped them, notwithstanding all the risks which they foresaw. I do appeal to honourable members from Ireland, sincerely for the sake of their own country, I appeal to them not to join in oppressing Nonconformists who have been their friends, with the enemies of their faith and their race."

"Until Mr. Lloyd George spoke to-night," wrote one of the most observant of Parliamentary pressmen in his description of the debate, "Nonconformity has gone without a recorder and a champion. A comparison with Bright's method and style—of course with real differences—often rose to my mind as I listened, for here were Bright's simplicity of thought, directness of expression, and vivid instinctive fighting quality." It was this fighting quality, with its wealth of rhetorical grace, and its logical statement of unanswerable facts, which made this speech surpassingly brilliant as a piece of oratory, and most effective in its stimulation of the Liberal Opposition.

"The issue we are deciding," declared Lloyd George in another of his speeches on the subject, "is indeed a great one. It is an issue upon which the future destiny of this country depends. There is a crisis in the history of nations as in the history of individuals, when on the action of a moment depends the whole of its career. That hour has now struck

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for Britain. Has she got the old mettle? Will she ring true? There are men who are now attempting to put freedom on the market. Will the nation sell?

"If England turns her back upon centuries of great traditions of struggle for human freedom," he continued in the same vibrant note; "if Scotland forgets the heroes who have converted every moorland and crag in her western wilds into altars upon which have been sacrificed lives for the emancipation of the human conscience; if Ireland is willing to throw away the fruits of 700 years of suffering and struggle for national liberty at the bidding of a Tory cardinal, our duty in Wales is clear. We at least will keep the flag of liberty flying high."

With the embarkation of the Bill upon its Committee stage Lloyd George laid aside his customary weapons of polemical warfare. It was inevitable that his innate skill in the difficult art of fashioning ingenious amendments should avail itself of the lavish opportunities provided, but even this was rigidly subjected to the main purpose of securing efficiency in the primary schools.

In those days he invariably sat in the corner seat of the second bench below the gangway on the Opposition side. In front of him sat Labouchere, and immediately behind him on the third bench was Tim Healy, while John Redmond occupied the topmost corner in the file. Instinctively the House turned to that single file in anticipation of the most deadly line of fire, and rarely was it disappointed. Though the youngest in age, Lloyd George soon gained pre-eminence among that brilliant coterie of Parlia-

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mentarian debaters. His humour was more genial than that of Labouchere, while even an Irish journalist was forced to admit that "Mr. Lloyd George's invective inflicts a deeper wound than does Mr. Healy's, while his glowing style throws into shade the measured monody of Mr. John Redmond's eloquence."

During the Committee stage Lloyd George's place in his corner seat was never vacant. He eschewed all those claims upon one's time and energy which are stable features in the daily life and activity of almost every Member of Parliament. In his desire to follow every phase of the discussion he steadfastly refused to give heed to the daily stream of callers in the outside lobby. He discarded his favourite haunt of the Members' Smoking Room, and he only allowed himself time for the most hasty of meals. As a result he was afterwards able to claim that he had heard every speech that was made on the Bill in the course of its Committee stage, and, he added, he learnt something from every one, even from the poorest of them.

Sitting in his corner seat, with his bunch of notes, which he had carefully prepared before coming down to the House, he would listen attentively to each successive speech, and, as often as a good point was scored, he would there and then jot it down. Sometimes the bores would hold the floor, and the House would speedily empty, but Lloyd George would remain in attentive interest during even the dulllest of speeches. He knew that a dull speaker can make a good point, even though it be in a bad way. And so in the course of the debate he quietly garnered all those good points

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which few heard and still fewer appreciated. Later, when Members flocked back to the Chamber, he would leap to his feet, and he would invest those same points with the sparkling qualities of his own wit and eloquence with so consummate a skill as to evoke the admiration of the House.

In the debate on a new clause which Lord Hugh Cecil proposed to add to the Bill for the provision of special facilities for religious instruction in all public elementary schools, whether denominational or otherwise, in any town or district where parents desired such instruction, Lloyd George reminded the House that there were a large number of children who belonged to no sect at all. Who was to take charge of that class of children? If, as he pointed out, the suggested proposal were adopted, there would be disputed spheres of influence in the schools. Hundreds of little theological Fashodas would be set up all over the country. One theological sect would claim that "that boy belongs to us," while another would declare that he belonged to them. At one time a particular child would belong to one sect, but a week or fortnight later there would be a Jameson Raid, or there would be some local Major Marchand who would take the child away. "It is not a question of superior dogmas," exclaimed Mr. Lloyd George in an ironic tone, "but rather of superior buns." Lord Hugh Cecil had talked as if all the children in the elementary schools were thirsting for Church dogmas. "They are simply ravenously greedy for buns," retorted Mr. Lloyd George. "It is a question of blankets with the parents," he added. That, he

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maintained, would be the sort of thing that would go on. "There will be bitterness and wrangling and jealousy, one sect declaring: 'We are only getting Tuesday. Monday is the best day, and that has been given to the Methodists.'"

While ready to acknowledge the sincerity of Lord Hugh Cecil's desire to spread the spirit of religion throughout the land, Lloyd George reminded him that the strife which would inevitably be engendered by his plan was not the kind of atmosphere in which religion could prosper. "This sort of strife and squabbling," he added, "would go on with the facilities given for what may be called lamb-stealing, one sect crossing the boundary and taking sheep from the flock of the other." In the concluding passage of his speech, he urged that what was wanted was to train the children as common citizens rather than to foster facilities for the introduction of such sectarian squabbles and wrangles into the atmosphere of the schools.

"It is a high compliment," wrote one, who, day after day, had surveyed the scene from the vantage ground of the Press Gallery, "but, save Mr. Gladstone, I recall no Committee debater as good as Mr. George. Mr. Balfour's parliamentary tact is great, but he does not possess the young Welshman's thoroughly analytical mind, his capacity for bringing pertinent knowledge to bear upon his subject, and presenting a sharply outlined and brightly coloured picture of the thought that is in him. Withal he brings to debate the very spirit of keenly strong combat. Interruption usually quickens and never disturbs the current of his ideas;

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and, at their very best, his speeches are models of lively grace, and of quick, sinuous movement."

Although Lord Hugh Cecil and Lloyd George, as chief protagonists of the opposing forces of Anglicanism and Nonconformity, fought each other strenuously over the passage of the Bill, these doughty combatants came to respect, if not to appreciate, each other's point of view. As far apart as the poles though they were in their respective interpretation of the fundamental purpose of an elementary school, they met on common ground in their insistence on the validity of conscience; and the transparent sincerity of the one readily attracted the other. In the House they listened to each other's speeches with unaffected courtesy, while in the Lobbies they were to be seen frequently interchanging views in their eagerness to influence each other's convictions. On one occasion the interchange extended to an exchange of controversial pamphlets. Lord Hugh Cecil presented Lloyd George with a treatise by Canon Moberly, and in return he was given one of Dr. Clifford's vigorous pamphlets, "and I really think," Lloyd George subsequently remarked on the floor of the House, "that the noble Lord had the better of the bargain."

¹ In the course of a speech on the Third Reading, he declared: "It is not a question of the right of the parent, but of the interest of the community. Is it in the interest of the community that it should intervene in these squabbles between forty or fifty different sects? You cannot say the Anglican Church has a right and the Primitive Methodists have not. If all these were to exercise their rights, you split up

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education and shatter it to atoms. Lord Salisbury said with regard to India that the Government had a great horror of using its authority as a partisan of one religion more than another. Those were wise words, and I wish the statesmanship which is good enough to be applied to the people of India could be applied to the people of England and Wales."

Equally emphatic was his repudiation of the value of denominational dogma as an essential ingredient in education. "Honourable Members opposite," he exclaimed, "say that dogma is essential. Who at the present moment is their ideal of a great British patriot? The Member for West Birmingham," he declared as he pointed his finger at Mr. Chamberlain, "who belongs to the least orthodox of the Churches. He is not a believer in the dogmatic religion of the noble lord" (Lord Hugh Cecil), "and yet nobody doubts the genuineness of his patriotism. Dogma, therefore, even from the point of view of honourable gentlemen opposite, is not essential to British statesmanship. I am not sure," he added as he looked at the reclining form of Mr. Balfour and remembered that he was a Scottish Presbyterian, "that the Prime Minister is not a schismatic according to the notions of the noble lord. Even he is not safe, if it depends upon dogma. He is the sort of man that the noble lord prays the Good Lord to deliver us from on Sundays and feast days."

But this good-natured banter hardened into scorn as he proceeded to quote some passages as an example of what is taught in institutions which are maintained at the public expense, from a manual in use

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at one of the Church Training Colleges. "You are to order yourself lowly and reverently to all your betters," ran the quotation. "Who are your betters? Those who are in a higher position to ourselves either by birth, wealth or office? I wonder," Lloyd George quietly remarked, as he lifted his eye from the book to Lord Hugh Cecil, who sat facing him on the opposite side, "whether the noble lord acts up to that. How does he treat the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs (Lord Cranborne)? Does he show him the deference which is due to his catechismal superiority? As to wealth," he continued, "am I to go up to a gentleman and say: 'I am at a loss to know whether I should take off my hat to you. Would you mind assisting me by telling me what is your balance at the bank?' You have no right to teach this repulsive snobbery," he exclaimed in a voice that vibrated with indignation as he tossed aside the manual. "It is from such snobbery," he added in a passionate tone, "that the carpenter's Son suffered."

In reply to the oft-repeated statement that undenominational teaching in the Board schools was obnoxious to Churchmen, Lloyd George proceeded to say: "To teach kindness, goodness, honesty, purity, temperance, chastity, this is undenominational, obnoxious, to all good Churchmen. But to teach them to cringe before wealth; yes, this," he exclaimed with scornful emphasis, "is pure religion and undefiled, and therefore you ought to endow it. And you are to order yourselves lowly and humbly to wealth. That is not the teaching I would have. I would rather have the words which the American schools

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teach: 'If any man be great among you let him be a servant.' All the great Presidents of America," he added in tones of admiration, "have been poor men without a pedigree." A hush fell upon the House as it listened to the thrilling note of the concluding passage of his speech: "There is one thing that has always struck me about these tenets of the Church catechism—how irrelevant they are to the real perils that children have to encounter in life. Give the children the Bible if you want to teach them the Christian faith. Let it be expounded to them by its Founder. Stop this brawling of priests in and around the schools, so that the children may hear Him speak to them in His own words. I appeal to the House of Commons now, at the eleventh hour, to use its great influence and to lift its commanding voice and say, 'Pray, silence for the Master!'"

The occasion was marked by a striking tribute from Mr. Balfour to the sustained brilliancy of Lloyd George's contributions to the long series of discussions. "There is the honourable Member for the Carnarvon Boroughs," he said, as he nodded in the direction of Lloyd George, "who through these debates has played, in my judgment, a most distinguished part, though I confess I wish he had left unsaid, even from his own point of view, a great many things which he sometimes said. If he had omitted a certain class of observations I think he would have greatly gained in authority inside and outside the House. I believe that in the opinion of both sides of the House and of the country the honourable gentleman has shown himself to be an eminent Parliamentarian."

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The Education Bill of 1902 may be described as the watershed of Lloyd George's political career. On the one side lay the hatred and enmity begotten of unflinching devotion to unpopular causes. On the other side flowed the refreshing streams of personal popularity and Parliamentary prestige. One of the acutest of Parliamentary critics likened him to the figure in a well-made play who comes upon the stage at the apt and critical moment. The Parliamentary stage had been growing meaner and narrower. Resolute spirits were refraining from entering; they were seeking more spacious careers in the executive work of Government at home and abroad. Even among the younger men who did enter Parliament there was a listlessness in regard to both its functions and opportunities. The supreme purpose of legislation had no attraction for them. They had "come to see the war through," and, for the rest, they tacitly accepted the arena made famous by the memories of Pitt and Burke and Gladstone as a by-product of their social interests.

But in the education controversy the atmosphere of the House changed. Once again its floor became the arena where great issues were in the ascendancy. And this change was in no small measure due to Lloyd George, for it was he who evoked the old spirit of conflict, and restored to politics the traditional clash of controversy.

XIII

THE AFTERMATH

CHAPTER XIII

THE AFTERMATH

THE year following the passing of the Education Bill was destined to witness many changes and violent upheavals in the established order of things. The Conservative Party still retained its predominant majority in Parliament; but the retirement of the Marquis of Salisbury and especially the fierce controversies over the Government's policy had visibly affected its stability.

One immediate result of the passing of the Education Bill was a perceptible waning in the traditional respect for law. The Act struck so deeply at the cherished convictions of the Nonconformists that they felt themselves compelled to offer an open and determined challenge to its administration. Under the direction of the most eminent of their leaders, they formulated the policy of Passive Resistance, a policy of refusing payment of the rate levied under the provisions of the Act for what was regarded as sectarian purposes. It was foreseen that this would result in the machinery of the law being invoked. As a matter of fact forced sales of goods and chattel became an everyday occurrence, and in scores of instances the policy brought in its trail even the harsh penalty of imprisonment.

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Ready as Lloyd George was to advocate and espouse this policy, he insisted that, in view of the different circumstances, Wales required quite another form of resistance. He laid stress upon the fact that, while in England their opponents were in the ascendancy, in Wales the reverse was the case. That outstanding fact dominated the situation, and he aimed at the strategic course of making each of the Welsh County Councils the unit in the policy of Passive Resistance. As he pointed out, a policy of individual Passive Resistance was unnecessary in Wales, for how could a Nonconformist majority on a County Council, with any regard for consistency, proceed to levy a rate in aid of a purpose of which they strongly disapproved, and sell up their own friends and supporters for refusing to pay such a rate? "All the king's horses and all the king's men," he declared, "cannot compel them to enforce such an outrage on conscience amongst the Welsh hills."

So great was the preponderance of Nonconformists on the Welsh Councils, that many of the leaders strongly urged that full advantage should be taken of the position by a resolute refusal to give administrative effect to the Act. Such action on the part of all the County Councils of Wales, it was contended, would inevitably produce such a state of chaos that the Government would be forced to consider complete popular control as the only alternative to the educational anarchy that would be the result.

"The Education Act of 1902," declared Lloyd George in a manifesto which he issued to the people of Wales after its passage into law, "has presented Wales with

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its greatest political opportunity. It is exceptionally equipped by training, conviction of habit and of thought to take full advantage of this opportunity. Wales presents a true spectacle of a well-ordered and highly-disciplined community where intense political and religious convictions produce no excesses which repel the most sensitive formalist, a patriotism at once as ardent and as broad as that which inspires any nation in the world. It is a patriotism which has not fallen into the fatal error of confounding depth of creed with breadth of outlook, or the equally fatal error of imagining that war and politics are the only fields where a man can exhibit his love for his native land, a patriotism which was almost purely literary before it became religious, and which was religious fully a century before it annexed politics to the national life. If in this great struggle upon which we are now entering, Wales acts with a firm courage and a dignified restraint—and I feel confident of its strength to do so—it will emerge from the conflict with a national position surpassing the dreams of the line of prophets who foretold great things for little Wales, ere they passed to their rest under the shadow of its hills.”

With a statesman’s instinct, he had based his opposition to the suggestion that the Welsh Councils should refuse to administer the Act, on the ground that, if the mere fact of an Act of Parliament being a bad one was regarded as sufficient reason for refusing to administer it at all, then each political party would, in future, set itself to refuse obedience to any Act of Parliament carried by its opponents of which it disapproved.

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"And if that is the principle," he continued, "on which we are going to act, then government in this country will be conducted on the same lines as it is in the South American Republics—by a series of revolutions." With characteristic astuteness he advised the Welsh County Councils to administer the new Act "in that good old spirit of the British Constitution which is never in a hurry," and to that end he proceeded to postulate certain principles. "I would give the Church Schools," he said, "their pound of flesh—just one pound, but not a drop of blood. We must put a premium upon popular control—no cash. "That," he urged, "must be our policy."

In their delight over so clever a solution of their duty, the representatives of the various Councils, assembled in a Conference at Cardiff hailed the proposal with acclamation, and adopted it with absolute unanimity as its own settled line of action. The Welsh counties readily fell into step under his leadership, and his deft phrase "No Control—no Cash," became the war-cry of the new campaign.

Assured of the support of the Welsh Councils, Lloyd George might well have been content to await the triumph of his policy with justifiable confidence; but even the prospect of victory could not divert his attention from the deeper issues involved. He saw the dangerous possibility of the struggle degenerating into a sectarian squabble which could not but prove inimical to the interests of all concerned. Amid the clamour and confusion of controversy, the educational welfare of the children was manifestly in danger of being forgotten, and as a result the com-

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munity at large would inevitably suffer incalculable loss.

Despite the eagerness of many of his political associates to expedite the fray, Lloyd George's characteristic trend towards conciliation and compromise asserted itself once more, with the result that while the welkin in Wales was still resonant with the defiant echoes of the Cardiff conference, he convened another meeting of representatives of the various public bodies in Wales; and, to this gathering, representatives of the minority were specially invited. At that conference he submitted a resolution in favour of an approach to the voluntary school authorities with a view of affecting a friendly arrangement between the conflicting forces. He urged the wisdom of such action on the twofold ground that it would serve to remove the differences between the two parties that had been begotten of misunderstanding, and would avert the great bitterness which would necessarily arise. He pointed out that, if embarked upon, the threatening struggle would be protracted for a period of five years, and although, as he said, he had not a glimmer of doubt in regard to the ultimate result, he fully realised that a struggle of that kind would involve the loss of a great united effort for educational progress, and that bitter memories would remain. "Personally," he exclaimed, "I would rather have an arrangement than a victory. It is true," he added, "that there is a touch of the old Adam in everybody. Every man likes to see his enemy down. But I think that we ought to crucify the old Adam in a controversy of this

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kind. It will be better in the interests of education that we should agree to shake hands." He therefore urged that a small body of some men representing both sides in the dispute, should meet at a round table conference for the purpose of making an honest attempt to arrive at a settlement which would obviously be far better for the cause of the religion than a victory which would leave a permanent feeling of bitterness behind it.

The suggestion was acted upon, and at the outset the prospects of agreement seemed hopeful.

But the hopes of a settlement were wrecked on the issue of the appointment of teachers. Certain of the Church representatives declined to surrender the prescribed right of the managers to make all the appointments in these schools, while, on the other hand, Lloyd George and his associates maintained that the Welsh Councils, whom they represented, could consent to no terms which did not include the appointment of the teachers whose entire salaries they would be required to pay. And as neither side would abate one jot upon the issue, the negotiations came to an abrupt and unsuccessful end.

"Wales must therefore fight," he declared after the failure of the negotiations. "It is a conclusion that one is very reluctant to arrive at, but if Wales does not fight now, she will signally fail in her duty at a moment when the whole of the United Kingdom is looking to her to be in the vanguard of the struggle for religious freedom and equality."

With the failure of his efforts for a peaceful settlement, he found himself constrained to urge

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the policy of withholding rate aid from the voluntary schools that refused to come under popular control. "Money," he declared, "is the only argument that the managers of these schools understand." Satirising the education system of the country with its stipulated provision for investing the clergy with the right of appointing teachers in the voluntary schools, he said, "Why should the clergyman appoint the teacher, who is a Civil Servant? With equal fitness he might appoint the exciseman. Really," he added, "the parson has more in common with the exciseman than he has with the schoolmaster, for they both have to deal with spirits in bondage. What has the schoolmaster to do with theology? They may as well appoint a man as master mariner because of his views on apostolic succession."

The approach of the triennial elections afforded a magnificent opportunity not only for vitalising afresh the determination of the large majority of the Welsh Councils to withhold rate aid from the denominational schools, but also for evoking a striking demonstration of the unity of Wales in its resistance to the Act: Accordingly Lloyd George urged that no candidate should be supported until he definitely pledged himself to the policy of fully public control of the schools supported from public funds; to the abolition of all religious tests for teachers; and finally to the upholding of the No Rate Policy of the Welsh Councils.

With the flair of the born fighter, he rushed into the fray, journeying in all weathers to whatever part of the line seemed weakest. His speeches, with their thrilling appeal to Wales to be true to

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herself, reverberated throughout the land. And not in vain; for the results proclaimed a triumph which in its magnitude exceeded all expectations. Every one of the Welsh Counties, without a solitary exception, had endorsed the Lloyd George policy. Indeed in certain counties the majority was so overwhelming that the representatives of the minority numbered no more than the fingers of one hand.

"The Philistine parsons," exclaimed Lloyd George with unrestrained glee over so sweeping a victory, "have been smitten hip and thigh from Dan even unto Beersheba. Throughout the length and breadth of the land there was such an uprising of the people as has not been seen in Wales since the days of Llewelyn. To-day, Wales is one and undivided. There is something quite thrilling," he added, "in the quiet but firm note of defiance issued by the Welsh people through the ballot-box in reply to the menace of the Government."

Fortified by this resolute devotion of his countrymen to his No Rate Policy, Lloyd George returned to Parliament to indict the Government afresh for the wantonness of its action in attempting to foist upon Nonconformist Wales a legislative enactment so flagrantly at variance with the spirit and purpose of the great bulk of its people, and to make yet another appeal for a reconstruction of the law by introducing an Education Act Amendment Bill. There was the strong note of earnestness in his plea, but there was no truculence. He knew that Wales was behind him in his demands and that the authorities there would follow him in the fight, but he nevertheless

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sought after conciliation. Like a great conqueror, he felt he could afford to be generous, and that it was better that the enemy should make the necessary concessions with a good grace rather than that there should remain the seeds of future trouble and dissatisfaction. But his studied moderation, was without result. He had asked for bread; the Government offered him a stone. They were pledged to their supporters to put the Act in full force and they could not afford to turn a sympathetic ear to Lloyd George's appeal. As a result there remained only one course—open conflict between the opposing parties.

The Welsh representatives were not unprepared for the contingency which they were then called upon to face. Lloyd George had warned his supporters that when the policy of refusing rate aid came to be carried out the Board of Education would probably report the offending Councils as defaulting authorities. That report would forthwith be followed by an order which, however, would not be made operative until there had been a full public enquiry into all the facts of the case, facts which he believed would lead men of honour in their judicial capacity to hesitate before putting the law in force.

However, as he pointed out, there was no mandamus to compel a quorum of the Council to meet, and even if there were a quorum and the members declined to act, what then? Would the Board of Education press for the imprisonment of the defaulting members? "If so," exclaimed Lloyd George, "then Holloway jail will be much too small a place

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to hold the Councillors from Wales. They can no more mandamus County Councils than they can mandamus the President of the French Republic. I do not mean to say," he added, "that technically and in law they could not do it, but it is a thing unheard of that a central government should face the possibility of a conflict of that kind with local authorities in a question which involves a great principle. There is no precedent for it. Mandamus sixteen County Councils in Wales!" he exclaimed in an incredulous tone. "Why, they are not going to be so stupid! With the whole of Wales staring them in the face they must realise that the position is an impossible one."

His review of the impossibilities proved to be right. The Government did realise the futility of the form of coercion which the law allowed, and, instead of attempting the impossible, they resorted to fresh weapons in order to be strengthened for the inevitable conflict. And here it was that an excess of zeal jeopardised the otherwise strong position of Wales. Had Lloyd George's sagacious counsel to "administer the loop-holes" of the new Act been duly observed by each of the education authorities the Government would have had no excuse for fresh action; but, in its antipathy to the Act the County Council of Carmarthen—which was almost exclusively Nonconformist in its composition—proceeded beyond the limits prescribed in the Lloyd George policy. It refused to administer the Act at all. The Government dispatched a Commission to Carmarthen to inquire into, and to report upon, the state of things

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in the county. As the outstanding facts were in no way in question, the Commission had only the one course open of reporting the County Council in default. At once the Government availed themselves of that report to close up the loop-holes in the structure of the Act which Lloyd George had so ingeniously discovered. Fresh legislation, in the form of an Education (Local Authority Default) Bill was forthwith introduced in Parliament, its purpose being justified by Mr. Balfour on the ground that "when the law passed by Parliament is not carried out because local bodies fail in their duty, the Government is bound to obtain alternative machinery in the interests of the children as well as in the interests of the law."

This new Bill empowered the Board of Education to grant directly to schools such financial aid as had been withheld from them by any local authority, and to deduct a corresponding amount from the Parliamentary grants to which this local authority would be entitled. The ingenuity of this move was obvious; for any Council which refused to give rate aid to denominational schools would receive a correspondingly smaller sum in the way of a grant from the Imperial Exchequer, and in consequence, it would be compelled to levy a heavier rate upon its own community for the maintenance of the Council schools. Thus the Welsh Councils found themselves faced with the certainty that, with what measure they meted out to the denominational schools, it would be meted out to them in return. Further, recourse to the law courts on the part of the Board of Education was made un-

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necessary, and, consequently, all the tedious delay and inconvenience involved in the process of securing a mandamus, which Lloyd George had relied upon, was effectively obviated.

The Government had armed themselves with a new and more formidable weapon, which was calculated to bring to naught the threatened revolt in Wales. Lloyd George was thus faced by the necessity of devising some scheme as would serve to counter so effective a move.

In the new Act, the Government had proclaimed that the men administering the Education Act within the Principality were not to be trusted with the task of handling the financial side of its administration. "Who, then, can marvel," declared Lloyd George, "if our education authorities, being thus publicly certified as incompetent to deal with public money or to distribute the Parliamentary grant, were, in all humility, to draw the logical inference that they were equally unfit to administer the Education Act, and then to place their resignation in the hands of the nation?" He admitted that the strategy of the new policy was based upon the evangelical maximum of going twain with him "who would compel thee to go with him a mile;" and was nothing less than the dislocation of the whole administration of elementary education in Wales by throwing upon the Board of Education the entire responsibility for the management and maintenance of every public elementary school within the Principality. "They have neither the men nor the means to do it," he said, "for their new Coercion Act makes no provision for such a state

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of things. They have no power to appoint managers, to create new educational committees, or to levy rates." The first attempt to enforce the Act against any County Council would be taken as the signal for an immediate suspension of the administration of the Act all along the line. The education authorities would resign, and the school managers would give three months' notice to all the teachers. At the same time, effective precautions would be taken to safeguard the educational welfare of the children, for every Nonconformist chapel in Wales would be used as a public elementary school and the teachers would be re-engaged for their instruction.

Even *The Times* was compelled to acknowledge "the splendid audacity of the scheme with which Mr. Lloyd George has challenged the Government, and defied the law of the land, the energy and firm discipline with which he has subjected to his will the majority of the education authorities in Wales, the tactical skill with which he is confronting the opposing generals, and the cleverness with which he has enlisted the sectarian passions of Welshmen in his campaign." At the same time, it supplemented its admiration with a reproof. "Might it not be well to suggest to Mr. Lloyd George that in his particular case such rebellious outbreaks as this are something of an anachronism, Five or six years ago, in his callow Parliamentary youth, these schemes might be regarded as promising methods of self-advertisement adopted by a young politician who must, at any cost attract notice. But that time is long by. Mr. Lloyd George should no longer adopt tactics worthy only of his

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own distant past. He has become a serious politician, and a serious claimant for high office. If the 'flowing tide' flows farther and brings the Opposition fleet into the harbour that it longs for, Mr. Lloyd George will be there among the foremost. If we may apply his own words to such a situation, 'What will he do then?' He must recollect that Minister is a Member of the Government, and a Government, it is understood, is a body which governs. How will Mr. Lloyd George proceed to govern if any section of the future Opposition that feels aggrieved by his measures sets itself to organize a general strike? Perhaps in that event he will sometimes be heard to lament that he himself set so evil an example: that he condescended to become the chorus leader of rebellion."

These and such like reproaches left Lloyd George unaffected in the pursuit of his purpose. Faced with the ominous spectre of organized revolt on the part of a whole nation, with the resulting disintegration of all educational administration, the officials became smitten with fear and foreboding. They dreaded to put their new powers into operation lest the greater evil befell them, and they deemed it politic to resort to the Fabian policy of procrastination. The Government, enervated alike by internal dissensions and by the consciousness of the loss of popular support, found itself in too precarious a condition to embark upon a fierce struggle with a defiant community. Consequently nothing happened beyond an occasional skirmish between the Board of Education and the Welsh Councils, and such skirmishes, confined as they were to personal interviews and epis-

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tolary communications, were conducted on both sides with the utmost good temper.

It is idle to speculate as to what would have happened if the dominant issue had been forced. It must suffice to point out that, in the circumstances that did occur, Lloyd George secured an unparalleled triumph. He welded the thirteen counties of Wales into such a homogeneity of policy and of action as had never been known before. The geographical barriers, which had so often constituted an insurmountable barrier to national unity, were surmounted in the dominating consciousness of an accomplished unity, and in the passion of a common purpose. Not since the stirring times of Llewellyn—the last of the native princes of Wales—had the Welsh nation so unitedly arrayed itself under the banner of one leader as it had thus done under Lloyd George's resourceful leadership.

XIV

THE DECLINE OF THE GOVERNMENT

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“**N**OTHING succeeds like success.” The truth of the adage was brought home to Lloyd George in full force after his brilliant fight over the Education Bill. In every quarter he was hailed as the coming man in British politics, and on every hand the tokens of his enhanced prestige were in evidence. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, in the course of an address to a great audience of Welshmen referred to him as “your foremost champion.” “Yes,” he added with unaffected admiration, “and the champion of us all against clerical pretension and political injustice.”

In England, no less than in Wales, his star was in the ascendant. He was accorded the signal honour of a pressing invitation, accompanied with an assurance of success, from the Liberals of East Manchester to become their candidate at the General Election in opposition to Mr. Balfour.

Still more significant, as an indication of the great change in his political fortunes, was the invitation accorded him, early in 1904, to meet King Edward amid the social amenities of the dinner table. “It is an open secret,” declared a leading Society journal in its reference to the occasion, “that Mr. Lloyd George’s personality has for some time had a parti-

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cular attraction for the King, and that the prominent and sensational rôle which this well-known M.P. has taken on the political stage has made His Majesty very desirous of meeting him."

The period immediately following this eventful struggle against the Education Bill, with its multiplying manifestations of his commanding prestige, may be justly described as the determinative epoch in Lloyd George's political career, for it opened up before him a new vista in which he clearly saw the alluring potentialities of his own future.

"There is a very remarkable similarity between the Lloyd George of to-day and the Chamberlain of twenty years ago," wrote one of the shrewdest of Parliamentary observers at that time, "for the man of now, like the man of then, has an indomitable unquestioning self-confidence, an irresistible pushfulness. Look at him in debate, leaning forward, eager, keen, alert, hand to ear, ready to spring on his prey and rend him to pieces—the reflection of what his great adversary once was. His very manner of rising is reminiscent, the sudden leap to his feet, the momentary pause to shake out his coat-tails and stretch his shirt-cuffs. It was done just so, almost in the very place, years ago. The moment he opens his mouth to speak, the similarity is so startling as to make the listener start involuntarily—the same clear, low-pitched, cruel voice; the same keen incisive phrases; the same mordant bitterness; the same caustic sneer; the same sardonic humour; the same personal enmity. It is the very incarnation of Mr.

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Chamberlain in his younger days, a spectre of his dead self risen to haunt him."

But the younger man had advantages which the other conspicuously lacked. He had that rare gift of imagination which is so integral a part of the Celtic temperament, and a lightning-like wit which scorched even as it flashed. The contest between the two men developed into "a duel between the broadsword and the rapier—between the Saxon mind, direct and crashing as the thunderbolt, and the Celtic mind, nimble and elusive as the lightning." Like his namesake, the David of an earlier day, David Lloyd George did not fear to go up against the Goliath of the Philistines, and, in like manner, his sling prevailed against the mailed armour of the giant. With unerring aim, he directed the pebbles of his satire at the vulnerable spot of his formidable adversary. Mere abuse and vituperation always fell from Mr. Chamberlain's armour without producing even a dent on its surface. To be railed at was to him only the compliment of fear; but to be satirised—to be made the butt of scorn and to be held up as something to be laughed at—that was an experience which his indurate sensibility and cultivated composure could not brook.

It was this humiliating experience that Lloyd George so successfully inflicted upon him, with the result that the House of Commons witnessed what it had never seen before—the immobile features of Chamberlain wince in agony as his young assailant lashed him with his satire.

The superb daring of Lloyd George had its reflex influence upon his career. Not only was his prestige

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as a Parliamentary enormously enhanced, but in a special degree he became the pride of his Party. They found in him that which they had long desired—one who could effectively attack Chamberlain with his own weapons. They were also quick to mark in him that intuitive insight into the mind and mood of democracy, the possession of which had made Chamberlain so formidable a figure in the political arena. Consequently they hailed him as the rising hope of Liberalism, with all the fervour and enthusiasm with which they had greeted Chamberlain himself exactly twenty years before. The Parnell of Wales had indeed assumed the earlier mantle of the Chamberlain of England; the Apostle of Welsh nationalism had broadened out into the Protagonist of the English proletariat.

In view of the imminence of an appeal to the electorate, Lloyd George prepared to renew in the country the scathing onslaughts which he had made in the House on the bedraggled record of the Government as represented by its glaring blunders in the South African War and in the notorious unpopularity of its Education Act. But in his survey of the situation, with its battle-cries and contending issues, he overlooked Chamberlain's amazing resourcefulness. "You may burn all your leaflets and literature," Mr. Chamberlain had observed to the Chief Liberal Whip, shortly after his return from his tour in South Africa, "for I am going to start you on a new trail." The gestation of ideas begotten of the calm induced by the solitude of the "illimitable veldt" proceeded rapidly, and in the month of May, 1903, the new

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trail was duly laid in a great speech in the Birmingham Town Hall, in which Mr. Chamberlain strenuously advocated a drastic readjustment in the fiscal policy of this country for the purpose of securing the imposition of a tariff upon all imports from foreign countries, while imports from the Colonies and Dominions were to be accorded preferential treatment. The speech crashed through the land like a peal of thunder, and its reverberations were heard in the remotest recesses. It dislocated all the plans of the Party organisers, and threw into confusion all their calculations. It changed the centre of gravity in British politics.

With characteristic astuteness, Lloyd George discerned the underlying motive in this dramatic development. "Mr. Chamberlain's electioneering expertness is raising another issue," he declared to an audience of twenty thousand people in the Albert Hall, who had thronged to protest against the London Education Bill. "He is beating the kettledrum made in Germany, but let us drown it, if necessary," he added, in obvious reference to the distraint of goods of passive resisters, "with the clamour of the auctioneer's hammer." In thrilling tones he warned his audience that, if they allowed the clergy to train up in their schools millions of cadets year by year, England would wake up one day to find a great solid army around the throne of the priest. "Let England beware," he exclaimed. "Look at France! She has the horror of the priest in her blood. Go to Scotland! The proud children of the Covenant would not tolerate for an hour such priestly influence. Look at

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America! Ever since the Pilgrim Fathers recounted the sufferings of their ancestors, the Americans determined that the cornerstone of the greatest nation in the world should be religious equality. And shall England," he cried, "England, the refuge of the slave, the home of free ideas, the land of Wycliffe and of Cromwell, now put on the manacles of the priest?" He appealed to Englishmen, for their fair fame and for the honour of their native land, to shatter the clerical bonds into fragments.

Notwithstanding the fervour of such appeals, the enunciation of the Chamberlain policy caught the ear of the man in the street, who was avowedly much more concerned with the prospect of material gain than with the insensate, bitter wrangle between Church and Dissent over the teaching of the Catechism in the elementary schools. Lloyd George readily recognised this fact, and though he knew that the resentment aroused by the Education Act could be utilised as a powerful auxiliary force in the fight at the polls, he had to admit that Chamberlain had succeeded in shifting the main ground of the conflict. There was, therefore, no course open to him other than to meet the formidable gladiator on his own ground. This he did with his customary dexterity, for while he denounced the new proposals as "a wholesale, searching and invidious appeal to human selfishness, based upon the principle of universal loot," he at the same time warned the Liberal Party of the danger of remaining merely upon the defensive, content to vindicate the policy of Free Trade on the ground of its past triumphs, or on the strength

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of statistical returns. A definite programme, however pernicious some of its ingredients might be, was, to his discerning mind, of far greater attractiveness in the sight of the masses than a whole series of traditional negations.

At an influential gathering of Liberals he urged the paramount necessity of a counter-policy. He reminded the company that, while the Liberals were telling the fat kine that their pastures were rich. Chamberlain was capturing the lean kine by droves. He laid stress upon the fact that their chief opponent had something to propose, and he warned them that, unless they were prepared as Liberals to offer something better, the electors would eagerly accept the fiscal proposals. He boldly declared Chamberlain to be right in his declaration that things were not well with this country, "for," as he said, "as long as we have millions who do not get their fair share of the things of which there is such an abundance in the land, things are not well. You cannot feed the hungry with statistics of national prosperity, or stop the pangs of famine by reciting to a man the prodigious number of cheques that pass through the Clearing House. We must, therefore," he urged, "propose something better than Mr. Chamberlain. He himself counselled the Party to epitomise its alternative policy in its advocacy of "Public interest first; private interest afterwards," a policy which he claimed to be the precise reverse of their opponents.

Lloyd George continued to keep a vigilant eye on his great adversary and he missed no opportunity of assailing his prestige. Within a week of the Bir-

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mingham speech, an Old Age Pension Bill was brought forward in the House of Commons. Introduced by a private Member, and confined to a Friday's sitting, the measure was inevitably doomed to be still-born, but it provided Lloyd George with a pretext for a fresh attack upon Mr. Chamberlain as one who had flaunted an Old Age Pension scheme of his own. When he began his speech Mr. Chamberlain was absent, but he seemed to have anticipated an attack, for no sooner had Lloyd George referred to him than, to quote an observer, "from the mysterious shadow of the Speaker's chair, pale, attenuated, sinister, with raised eyebrow and drooping lip—reminiscent of Irving making his first appearance in Faust—peered Mr. Chamberlain." A minute later, he was seated in his customary place on the Treasury Bench, where he listened with characteristic imperturbability as Lloyd George proceeded in biting tones to charge him with having pocketed the votes of the working classes after having procured them with empty promises of old age pensions. Just at that moment, as he glanced at his antagonist, Lloyd George marked a contemptuous curl of Mr. Chamberlain's lip. "All that the right honourable gentleman has for them now," he quickly added, as his voice surged with scorn, "is a sneer." Instantly Chamberlain sprang to his feet to deny that he sneered. "Well," replied the speaker, his eye flashing with triumph, "perhaps sneer is not the right word, but he sniffs at them."

He lost no time in pressing home his advantage. "The right honourable gentleman," he proceeded in words that were blistering in their satire, "has seen

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the beauties of the illimitable veldt and he has forgotten all about temperance, finance, education, and old age pensions. These insignificant things are not to be put in the same category as the illimitable veldt. He has rounded the circle on old age pensions, as he has on other topics. In 1894 the right honourable gentleman said that the deserving poor were impatient for this reform. Have the poor become less impatient?" he inquired in a mocking tone, as he looked across at Mr. Chamberlain, who was obviously ill at ease; "or is it," he continued, "that they are less poor or less deserving? Why has the right honourable gentleman altered his opinion on the question? 'What,' says the right honourable gentleman, 'deserving poor, are you clamoring for your pensions still? Turn your thoughts from these worldly insignificant affairs, and contemplate the illimitable veldt.'"

Lloyd George was far too experienced a controversialist to imagine that mere ridicule could kill the new campaign, effective as the exercise of irony might be. He saw that the issues vitally affected every industry in the land, inasmuch as they all hinged on the material welfare of the teeming millions who literally live by the sweat of their brow. The situation demanded something much sterner than mere dialectical quips or mirth-provoking sallies, and so he lost neither time nor opportunity in coming to grips on the main issue of the controversy, and he supplemented his inborn fertility of pungency and satire with a virility of argument and a loftiness of vision that invested his speeches with a force that was

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unsurpassed by the contributions of any other statesman. In speech after speech, he emphasised the fact that unemployment, low wages, long hours of toil and other evils, on which Mr. Chamberlain was basing his demand for the imposition of tariffs, were begotten not of the commercial, but rather of the social system of this country. He contrasted the state of things in Britain with that in the Protectionist countries of Europe, and, while ready to acknowledge that the circumstances of the working classes of Britain were far from being what they should be, he pointed out by a comparison of the statistical returns that the conditions were far worse in those countries that had adopted a policy of protective tariffs.

"We are spending forty millions a year more now than we did five years ago on the weapons of human slaughter," he declared in the course of a speech which he delivered in the Autumn of 1903, "and every country in the world is increasing its armaments. Three or four hundred millions a year are being spent in Europe on these terrible machines of murder and we seem to be at the point of flying at each other's throats. Argument has failed to break down this mad competition in armaments. We cannot get these men to meet at the same altar, and the world is divided into its Protestants, its Roman Catholics, its Greek Church, its Mahomedans, its Buddhists and its followers of Confucius. There is one thing that will help. Get them to meet in the Marketplace. They may come to the same mart, and men who have met each other in honest trade respect and honour each other. It is the next approach

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to friendship. With an open door to the trade of all the world, we shall gradually help to break down the terrible system which is crushing industry in Europe. I am a hopeful man," he continued, "and I feel that the time will come when, in spite of the armaments, the swords will be beaten into ploughshares and the spears into pruning-hooks, and there will be no more war. When that time comes, the name of Britain will be blessed as the country which, in spite of all the inducements of false statesmen, stood up against the world for a free mart for all."

It is not surprising that speeches conceived in so lofty a strain and vibrant with so rare an eloquence, should thrill the vast crowds that thronged to hear him, and should captivate for the menaced cause of Free Trade the personal devotion and enthusiasm of many thousands who, at the outset, had been ready to give heed to Mr. Chamberlain's proposals.

"After all is said and done, when every tribute has been paid to experience and authority, to wisdom and to right, to great sagacity and high public position," declared Mr. Winston Churchill, at a great demonstration of the citizens of Carnarvon, "the fact remains clear and undeniable that Mr. Lloyd George is the best fighting general in the Liberal army."

But though the tribute was as just as it was fervid, it did not epitomise the full or even the highest quality of Lloyd George's services to the cause and fortune of English Liberalism. He had not been content to shatter with the heavy artillery of his rhetoric the main outposts of the opposing forces, and thus dislodge them from their strategic positions. With

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characteristic clearness of perception, he had marked the outstanding need of the situation, and consequently he had been much more assiduous in the use of the trowel in the task of repairing the long gaping breaches in the citadel of Liberalism than he had been in the flourish of the sharp-edged sword for the rout of the foe. In the realisation of that purpose he had conceived the urgent necessity of a new Liberalism which should find its generating source and sustenance in the grim pressure of the economic needs of the community rather than, as had been the case with the old Liberalism, in the enunciation of party watchwords that had sought their force and relevancy in an entirely different setting of circumstances.

It was therefore not surprising that in every part of the land Lloyd George was hailed as the herald of a new era in British politics, and that the Liberal ranks were acclaiming him as the hope of their Party. This sense of pride in the possession of so clear-sighted and intrepid a leader visibly deepened into an exhilarating consciousness that Liberalism was enlarging its traditional borders and was bringing within the scope of its mission the amelioration of the lot of the people in a sense and in a degree that had hitherto been unknown. As a result political questions took on a new complexion, and fundamental issues were readjusted to the hard lot of the toilers. The squalid surroundings, amid which vast masses were ekeing out their existence, were at length being brought within the range of observation and the grim grey hearths of the toilers were perceptibly being touched by the diverted rays of new hopes.

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In the month of November, 1905, Lloyd George wearied with the long strain of his Parliamentary activities, and in the belief that the Government, although perceptibly weakened by successive secessions, would continue to pursue the uneven tenor of its way to the end of its prescribed course, set out for Rappallo in quest of much-needed rest and relaxation. He had not been many days on the Italian soil before he received a telegraphic message that Mr. Balfour had, by a stroke of strategy which was calculated to take the Liberal leaders unawares and cause them, in their still divided state, no little discomfiture, tendered his resignation to the King. Quick to forecast the result of so dramatic and unexpected a turn in the situation, with its inevitable reaction on his own political fortune, Lloyd George forthwith hurried back to London—in full assurance that he was destined for a place in the new Cabinet. It was no secret among his associates that he coveted the Secretaryship of State for Home Affairs in a well-grounded confidence that its Departmental interests were such as came within the full scope of his powers, and consequently could not fail to be congenial to him. Great, therefore, was his surprise, and still greater his disappointment, when Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who had succeeded to the vacated Premiership, proffered him the choice either of the Postmaster-Generalship or of the Presidency of the Board of Trade. On his hurried journey from Italy, as he naturally indulged in an anticipation of his impending preferment, neither of these posts had come within the ambit of his calculations. In

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the Post Office, with its humdrum routine of mere administration, he felt no interest; while the Board of Trade, with its supervision of the interests of trade and commerce, which manifestly postulated some practical knowledge of their technique, obviously lay quite outside the area of his experience and qualifications. When thus confronted with the necessity of choosing one of the proffered posts, he found that the Postmaster-Generalship carried with it a yearly salary of £2,500 while that attached to the Board of Trade was only £2,000. Solely dependent as Lloyd George was on his profession for his income, which, by his acceptance of office, he would be required to relinquish, and with the growing needs of a young family to provide for, an addition of £500 a year to the family purse obviously presented a consideration which could not be lightly disregarded. It was, however, no sooner envisaged than it was instantly set aside. "Seek not emoluments but seek rather responsibility," was the sagacious advice of a veteran statesman to him on the threshold of his Parliamentary career. It is a sentiment to which he has invariably and instinctively responded. He had no difficulty, therefore, in coming to an immediate decision in the choice of posts accorded him. In spite of its larger emolument, the Postmaster-Generalship, with its well-defined and restricted sphere of administration, offered him neither scope for initiative nor a challenge to enterprise; whereas the Board of Trade with its vitalising point of contact with the commerce of the country and especially with its rôle of official referee in industrial dis-

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putes, instantly opened out to him, as in a vista, far-reaching opportunities for setting the impress of his influence on almost every branch of British industry. The position was thus both a call and a challenge to him, and forthwith he chose it.

Although he himself had no misgivings in accepting the post, the announcement of his appointment evoked general surprise which found its expression in the Press. It was the last post in the Ministry that popular, and even professional, expectancy would have assigned him. In both temperament and experience he seemed to be so conspicuously lacking in the qualities which the position so obviously demanded, that his appointment appeared to be a clear illustration of the placing of a square peg in a round hole—with obvious risk of damage to both the peg and the hole. Some forty years earlier the country had been baffled by the same sort of startling phenomenon in the appointment of John Bright to the same post. On that occasion, *Punch* articulated the general misgiving with its curt, but pertinent, enquiry: "Will the sentimental orator be lost in the practical statesman or will both be extinguished?" And it was this self-same astonishment at the yoking of one who was endowed with all the emotional sensibilities of a popular orator, to the oversight of a Department which so manifestly required, in its official head, the possession of a preeminently practical temperament—that was voiced all over the country and that even stirred the cynics into open raillery, when the announcement of Lloyd George's appointment to the presidency of the Board of Trade was made.

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"Mr. Lloyd George, who has deposited, in the umbrella stand of the Board of Trade, the educational fiery cross with which he is lighting up the mountain crags and valleys of Wales, should," declared a popular writer, in an inventory of the personal characteristics of the leading men in the new Ministry, "prove a valuable humorous asset if only," he added, "he does not allow his sparkling humour to be extinguished in the statistical swamps of the Board of Trade."

However, notwithstanding the general astonishment with which his appointment to so unexpected a post had been received, he himself was utterly untouched by any feeling of apprehensiveness in thus finding himself in so unexpected a post. On the contrary, he embarked upon it with a serene sense of confidence that he would rise to the full level of its demands and even of its emergencies. "When a solicitor went to the Board of Trade," he declared, two years later, in an address to the members of the Law Society, on the occasion of the presentation of his portrait—in token of the pride of the legal fraternity in the brilliancy of his achievements as an administrator, "people expressed surprise. 'The idea of putting a solicitor to look after business,' they exclaimed, forgetting," he proceeded to add, in justification of his own appointment, "that the whole living of a solicitor depends on the success with which he looks after other people's business. It is his business to master the affairs of everybody; that is what he lives on, and there is hardly a branch of commerce or of industry that a busy solicitor does not come in contact with in the course of his profession."

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So, far, therefore, from being oppressed by misgivings of any kind in undertaking the oversight of a Department which popular opinion openly regarded as utterly unsuitable for the exercise of his characteristic gifts, on the contrary, he embarked upon the duties of his office with an instinctive faith in his capabilities to discharge them with credit to himself and with advantage to the State. Nay, more—he was quick to perceive the magnificent opportunity for enriching the weal of the community, which so strategic a position was placing within his grasp. “What can I do for Commerce?” was the first question that he addressed to the head officials of the Department on the day on which he made his first appearance among them. “Commerce,” he reminded them, “is the life-blood of Britain, and for that reason it is necessary to ensure its vitality and circulation.”

A close examination of the archives of the Department served to disclose an ancient legacy, the materialisation of which had for fully half a century baffled the resources of one régime after another. It had reference to the necessity of a stricter supervision, on the part of the State, of the intricacies of British shipping, and especially of a much needed drastic improvement in the lot and condition of the great body of seamen, with a view to ensuring not only their physical welfare as regards food and accommodation, but also their safety, as far as human contrivance could ensure it, in the pursuit of their perilous calling.

For many long years the urgency of such drastic legislation had been glaringly apparent, but its realisa-

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tion had been stubbornly retarded by the subtle machinations of vested interests. To a man of Lloyd George's temperament the record of past failures served as a challenge and so he instantly addressed himself to the deferred task in full determination to accomplish its attainment.

Equally characteristic was his method of approaching the task. Instead of wading labouriously through the bulky memoranda of his Department, he called into consultation the experts who had prepared the various reports, with the result that, with his inborn swiftness of apprehension, a few hours sufficed to supply him with all the essential facts. The opinions of the departmental experts were supplemented by personal interviews with leading representatives of both shipowners and seafarers. Expert opinion, which is too apt to become coloured with professional predilections, was thus tempered by that practical knowledge which personal experience alone can give.

The Bill was introduced early in the new session as the first item in the legislative programme of the Government. Its main proposals were set forth by Lloyd George, in a speech which visibly impressed the House of Commons by its lucid exposition of an intricate subject and by its astonishing grasp of detail. The House had long been familiar with his characteristic brilliancy in dialectics, but it was quite a novel experience to find him expounding the salient features of a complicated measure with an ease and a fulness of technical knowledge which even the most seasoned of Parliamentarians might well have envied.

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Although the Bill secured its second reading with the approbation of the whole House, Lloyd George was too experienced a Parliamentarian to overlook the fact that the testing time would come with the entry of the measure upon its Committee stage, when every clause would be subjected to the subtle processes of modification or readjustment which vested interests would skilfully devise. With characteristic prevision, he made the most careful preparations for all possible contingencies, and he left nothing to the improvisation of the Committee stage. He received deputations day after day; representatives of shipowners and of sailors, of dock authorities and of pilots, waited upon him in the privacy of his room at the Board of Trade office, and to each and all of them he extended a courteous reception and a patient hearing. He listened to their representations, and, when convinced of the justice of their pleas, he forthwith made the desired concessions.

The Bill finally emerged in triumph from the ordeal of the Committee stage, and in the month of November it completed its passage through the House of Commons. On every hand its sponsor received the heartiest felicitations not only on the consummate skill with which he had piloted the measure to the Statute Book, but also on his success in conciliating the conflicting interests of the various communities that were directly affected by the provisions of the measure. The steamship owners of Liverpool placed on record their high appreciation of the immense amount of time and trouble which he had de-

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voted to the preparation of the measure, and of the conspicuous ability and impartiality with which he had conducted its passage through Parliament; while one of the leading shipowners of Glasgow publicly testified that, of all the Presidents of the Board of Trade, he had never known one who had so thoroughly mastered the details of such complicated questions as had Lloyd George.

From the outset the new President devoted himself to the exacting demands of his Department with so whole-hearted a devotion that he found neither time nor inclination for other interests. As he confessed to his constituents, he had never been so hard worked in his life. He toiled at his desk at the Board of Trade in Whitehall Gardens from ten o'clock in the morning until eleven o'clock at night, and even when it was necessary for him to attend the House of Commons to answer questions or to deal with matters that fell within the jurisdiction of his office, his unfinished tasks suffered no interruptions, for they were resumed with undiminished zest in his own private room at the House. The congenial haunt of the Members' Smoking room ceased to attract him, and he resolutely resisted all those allurements of the public platform which had hitherto constituted the main passion of his life, and even the House of Commons found itself baffled with the strange phenomenon of a silent Lloyd George.

Early in the session of 1907 he introduced a Bill to amend the law relating to patents and designs with a view of securing additional checks against invalid patents and a cheaper procedure for the

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renovation of existing patents. The main purpose of the existing patent law, as he reminded the House, was the encouragement of inventive ingenuity and the promotion of British industry, but he pointed out that oftentimes when a British inventor, who, as often happened, was a poor man had secured patent rights and just sufficient capital to set up the necessary works and to equip them with the requisite machinery, he would suddenly find himself harassed by some powerful foreign syndicate on the ground that his patent was already covered by rights which they had previously obtained, for their patents were invariably couched in exceedingly vague terms. Consequently, the whole machinery of a powerful organisation would be ruthlessly used to crush the poor inventor. Obviously such a state of things constituted not merely a serious handicap on the products of creative genius, but a gross outrage on every principle of common justice. For that reason Lloyd George set himself to tighten the meshes of the patent laws so as to give every British inventor fair play and his foreign competitor no favour. To that end he devised a drastic simplification in the procedure of compulsory license, and provision was made for any special applicant to apply for the revocation of a patent on the ground that it was not being adequately worked in the United Kingdom.

The gist of the Bill lay in its stipulations for rendering nugatory the grossly unfair action of foreign syndicates in deliberately thwarting the development of British industries. Foreign licencees of British patents were given a year in which to commence

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manufacture within the United Kingdom. As a result, several foreign firms hastened to erect large factories on British soil in order to profit by their patent rights, and in consequence employment was found for British labour.

While he was thus reaping one legislative triumph after another for his Department, there appeared on the horizon a cloud which was perceptibly growing blacker day after day. The discontent which had been so long simmering in the ranks of the railway workers over their long hours and the inadequacy of their wage was coming to a head, and there were unmistakable indications of a rupture which would inevitably take form of a disastrous railway strike. Early in the year the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants had formulated a series of demands to the directors of the various railway companies for higher wages, shorter hours, and, especially, for the official recognition of the society by the companies in their negotiations with those of its members who were in their service. To these demands the companies had turned a deaf ear, in manifest determination to refuse to recognise Trade Union officials in any dealings with their own staffs.

As the storm-cloud on the horizon grew larger, the nation in its natural dread of the threatening catastrophe instinctively looked to the President of the Board of Trade as the one man who would stave it off.

At the outset he was content to move only with the utmost circumspection, for the judicial powers with which the Conciliation Act had invested the Board of Trade could only be exercised when its

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intervention had been sought by one or more of the contending parties. But he had too keen a sense of the gravity of the situation and of the imperative need of an effective intervention to await the result of the men's ballot before taking definite steps to prevent the threatened rupture. For that reason he invited the chairmen and managers of the various railway companies to meet him for an informal discussion on the situation. When they came, he treated them with the utmost respect and candour. He indicated to them the limited powers of the Board of Trade for dealing with the questions at issue, and he won their confidence forthwith by his assurance that he had no desire or intention of dictating to them the course they ought to pursue. All that he desired, and desired most strongly, he declared, was to prevent a strike which could not but have the most disastrous effects upon the whole of the community. He urged, therefore, that a way should be found out of the difficulty without any sacrifice of principle on either side. To that end he submitted to their consideration certain suggestions which had been drafted by his advisers at the Board of Trade and by others whose opinions were entitled to consideration. These suggestions they readily agreed to consider, while Lloyd George undertook to submit them in the meantime to the executive committee of the Amalgamated Society. In this way he succeeded in establishing communication between the contending parties.

With unwearying patience he continued to pursue his appointed purpose as day after day he conferred

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now with one party and now with another, in the pursuit of his purpose of bringing their outstanding differences within the compass of mutual concessions. At last his patience and his resourcefulness were rewarded with a settlement which not only saved the country from the threatened catastrophe, but also gave satisfaction to both parties in the controversy as a settlement that represented, for each of them, peace with honour.

The settlement was based upon a most skilful compromise, for neither of the parties had been required to sacrifice its main principle. On the one hand, the position maintained by the Directors had not been infringed, while, on the other hand, the principle of recognition which the men demanded had also been conceded; for whereas the men had demanded that their advisers should come in at the first stage of the negotiations between the railway companies and their employees, they were permitted, by the agreement arrived at, to come in at the last stage.

Naturally, the settlement evoked the utmost satisfaction throughout the country, and on every hand it was hailed as a great personal triumph for Lloyd George. "No other member of the Government could have done what he has done," exclaimed one of the leading Conservative journals in ecstatic homage to his achievement; while *The Times* declared that he had very nobly enhanced his political reputation and his prestige by his successful settlement of a task which had required capacity and courage as well as the tact and patience so essential in the reconcilia-

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tion of opposing interests. The general sense of jubilation found a fitting climax in the eloquent tribute which the Prime Minister paid his young colleague at the Lord Mayor's banquet at the Guildhall three days later, when he referred to the successful settlement of a crisis which, as he expressed it, had been a source of grave anxiety to the Government. "Our burden," he added, "was lightened by the energy with which our friend and colleague, Mr. Lloyd George, brought to the situation, which appeared at one time to be almost intractable, and by the exercise his great gifts of unconquerable hopefulness, unfailing courage and alert diplomacy."

In pursuance of his determination to make each successive session fruitful of special legislation for the promotion of British commerce, Lloyd George turned his attention to the problem of the re-organisation of the Port of London with the view of eliminating the conflict of interests and of authority which was so manifestly prejudicial to its progress. The oversight of the Port was shared between thirty and forty different companies, "all of them meddling with the river," as he put it, but none of them able to do anything effective because of the vested interests of the rest. The matter had long challenged the attention of the Board of Trade, but every attempt at reorganisation had been persistently thwarted. Heedless of the difficulties in the way, Lloyd George set himself to grapple with the problem; and in preparation for the task he made a special visit to the ports of Hamburg and Antwerp in order to learn at first hand the mode of their administration. While

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there he made the most exhausting investigations, the result of which were embodied in the Port of London Bill, which was introduced early in the Session of 1908. The Bill vested the oversight of the Port in one central authority, and so eliminated that multiplicity of interest and of function which had so long militated against its progress. It was subsequently described by Lord Milner "as the best way out of a very complicated and difficult position," and it made an easy passage into law.

As the result of such untiring zeal and enterprise in promoting the interests to British commerce, the Board of Trade became invested with a prestige and popularity such as it had never known before. Mr. Asquith publicly testified that Lloyd George had succeeded in vivifying its methods and its functions. He had stripped it of all those accretions of routine and of restrictions which had made it the traditional bane of the commercial community, and had made it the galvanic centre of British trade. The tribute found ready echo throughout the land. The Chambers of Commerce, which had regarded his appointment to the Board of Trade with astonishment and even with alarm, acclaimed his legislative and administrative achievements with the utmost fervour and he was enthusiastically acclaimed in commercial circles as "the best President that the Board of Trade had ever had."

XV

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER

CHAPTER XV

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER

EVENTFUL as the year 1907 had been in Lloyd George's career, its successor was destined to be still more so.

After a heroic struggle with the long illness which had incapacitated him for the exacting demands of his position as the head of the Government, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, early in the month of April, resigned the Premiership, and its reversion passed to Mr. Asquith. The resulting vacancy in the Chancellorship of the Exchequer drew forth keen speculation both in Parliament and in the country. It was known that John Morley had ardently coveted the position at the time when the Ministry was first formed. In the face of his long and outstanding services to both the Liberal Party and the State, Mr. Asquith could not do other than proffer the vacant position to him; but Morley declined, and the newly appointed Premier was consequently free to seek a successor elsewhere. Already public opinion had, with remarkable unanimity, anticipated his choice. "Opinion in the House," declared one of the leading Parliamentary pressmen, "is unanimous in nominating the new Chancellor of the Exchequer. In the brief course of the still young administration nothing has

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been more remarkable than the position achieved by Mr. Lloyd George. When he was nominated to Cabinet rank with the Presidency of the Board of Trade, the despair which the results of the General Election had created in the minds of the country gentry deepened. They knew the Member for the Carnarvon Boroughs as a bitter-tongued debater who did not fear to stand up in the House of Commons and speak disrespectfully of Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain. If three years ago anyone had foretold that, within a space of time scarcely exceeding two years, Mr. Lloyd George would be regarded on the Opposition side of the House and by Conservatives throughout the country as one of the most reliable and popular members of the Liberal Government, he would in the interests of domestic and public safety forthwith have been haled to a lunatic asylum. Yet the fact remains that the firebrand of three previous Parliaments has in the fourth earned for himself the position of a statesman and an administrator second to none on the Treasury Bench."

Mr. Asquith's choice of Lloyd George evoked a general chorus of approbation. "No better man could have been found for the post," *The Times* declared, "however free Mr. Asquith might have been in his choice," and its pæon was re-echoed in the editorial columns of the *Daily Mail*. "Mr. Lloyd George's career," it testified, "is the best and fullest justification of this selection. He has proved in office that he possesses in exceptional measure that practical business capacity, self-restraint, initiative and large open-mindedness which, allied with the

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faculty of conciliation, are required of one who will control the national finances." In its comment on the striking unanimity of approval which had crowned the appointment, the *Spectator* pointed out that *The Times* and *The Daily News* were "for once in agreement."

Many years ago, when a reform of the judicature of this country, which had become manifestly necessary, was resisted on the ground of expense, Lord John Russell declared that he was not going to be deterred by that argument so long as the object was to give the suitor justice. "If you cannot afford to do justice speedily and well," he wrote, "you may as well shut up the Exchequer and confess that you have no right to raise taxes for the future for the protection of the subject." In like manner Mr. Lloyd George discerned that the Exchequer existed for a loftier purpose than the immediate and the necessary one of levying taxation. He saw in it a great leverage for uplifting the social and economic conditions of the great mass of the toilers beyond the enervating shadows of carking care and want, and in the light of that vision he embarked upon his new office with a spirit that knew neither doubt nor diffidence.

In the course of a speech on the motion for the second reading of the Old Age Pensions Bill, Lloyd George had taken occasion to describe the Bill as "a beginning, but a real beginning," in the materialisation of the purposes of the Government in the direction of social reform. Already statutory recognition had been made of the liability of the

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employer for any accident or mishap which befell any one of his employees in the fulfilment of his task, and which disabled him from following his daily vocation. The Old Age Pensions Bill widened the area of the application of the principle of liability, by making the State responsible for the welfare of the toilers who should find themselves incapacitated by infirmity or age for securing their livelihood. But undeserved poverty among the great mass of the toilers invariably has its origin in one of three causes: old age, sickness, unemployment. The causes differ, but their results are the same. For that reason the social legislation of the Government would be left in an unfinished state until the trilogy of the causes of undeserved poverty had been satisfactorily dealt with. Accordingly, the Government resolved upon the immediate completion of the task, and to Lloyd George, as the Minister who would be responsible for providing the necessary means, was entrusted the realisation of the project.

To gauge the value of theories under the test of practical experience, he set out on a visit to Germany in order to study on the spot the administration of the system of State Insurance which was already in operation there. *En route* he stayed for some days at Carlsbad, where he met the French Premier, M. Clemenceau. While there, he accorded a representative of the *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna a personal interview, the publication of which created quite a stir in both Austria and Germany. The interview was prefaced with a reference to the British statesman as being of a thoroughly English type, tight and slim.

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"His small eyes," it was added, "are very shrewd, and dart quick, keen glances." In reply to an enquiry whether he believed in an *entente* between Germany and England, Lloyd George declared that he was not prepared to say that such an *entente* could be concluded to-morrow or the day after, but he was firmly convinced that it was the only way by which the universal tension which oppressed Europe would be ended, and by which the mutual apprehension with which England and Germany were equally filled could be dissipated. He pointed out that he had recently protested against the action of certain anti-German journals in his own country in seeking to inflame a feeling of distrust between England and Germany; but the language of certain journals in Germany had been equally responsible. "I believe," he said, "that we must work for the conclusion of an *entente* between England and Germany in order that we may be able to devote ourselves wholly to the tasks of peace, of progress, and of social reform."

Amid all the tokens of welcome and of hospitality which were accorded him in Germany, he never missed the main purpose of his visit. He pursued his investigations with unrelenting thoroughness into the working system of National Insurance. He took note of the various ramifications of the organisation. He questioned the officials and supplemented their information by personal consultations with employers of labour and with trade union leaders. In this way he secured first-hand information which he described as "extremely valuable."

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Notwithstanding his preoccupation with the demands of his high office, and the still more exacting calls of political controversy, the year had brought Lloyd George a variety of honours. He was nominated as the Liberal candidate for the Rectorship of Glasgow University in succession to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and in the month of June he was given the honorary degree of D.C.L. of the University of Oxford. In presenting him for his degree, the Public Orator described him in the traditional tongue as "*Vir valde impiger, perfervido Centorum ingenio ardens, Cambria parva attamen forti in imperium magnum missus*" ("a man full of energy, burning with the fervid genius of the Celt, whom gallant little Wales has sent to a position of wide authority"). This distinction was followed a few months later by the conferment of the degree of LL.D. by the University of Wales. On this occasion his qualifications "as the most eminent of the sons of Wales" were acclaimed in the ancient tongue of his fathers. "So highly has he already been honoured," declared the Orator when presenting him, "that the best gift which Wales can offer him can add nothing to his name or dignity." He was described as having made his way from the cottage to the Senate, and as being no loss to Wales because he had become more to the Empire. "Wales will not lose the story of his career. She will treasure it in gold and it will remain an encouragement and an inspiration to her sons for ever. If he has charmed the English with the magic of his silver tongue, he has not forgotten his mother tongue in which he first learnt to speak."

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Flushed with such distinctions, he sought the seclusion of the Treasury for the preparation of his Budget. He was not the man to be content with a traditional Budget. He had entered upon his office with a keen realisation of the fact that finance marks the keystone of social reform, and, faced as he was not only with the burden of increased liabilities, but also with the clamant need of raising the standard of living among the poor, he marked the imperative necessity of turning aside from the worn-out ruts in quest of fresh and more lucrative sources of income. He had little difficulty in deciding upon the lines of his policy. Even the journal which had previously described him as being at his "wits' end" to know how to find the necessary money, was able to announce later, "on thoroughly reliable authority," that Lloyd George already knew where to put his hand to find means wherewith to meet the country's financial responsibilities.

As will be recalled, it was on Budget day that Lloyd George first took his seat in the House of Commons. Exactly nineteen years later it was thus given to him to know from the fulness of personal experience the emotions which possess a Chancellor of the Exchequer when he rises to present to the crowded House the results of his travail. No Budget, however, had ever been anticipated with so feverish an expectation or with so glaring a contrast of hope and of fear as that which Lloyd George unfolded to the House of Commons on April 29th, 1909. It was known that he had to make provision for an increased expenditure to the amount of thirteen million pounds,

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and there was a general anticipation that he would not hesitate to strike out in new directions. Popular expectation found its full justification in the long and memorable statement which he made on this occasion.

"This is a War Budget," he exclaimed, in a resonant tone in the concluding passage of his memorable speech; "it is for raising money to wage implacable warfare against poverty and squalidness. I cannot help hoping and believing," he added, "that before this generation has passed away we shall have advanced a great step towards that good time when poverty, and the wretchedness and human degradation which always follow in its camp, will be as remote to the people of this country as the wolves which once infested its forests."

Lloyd George had begun his Budget speech at three o'clock. In view of the great strain which the effort involved, he had sought to husband his voice by speaking in a low conversational tone; but, after he had been speaking for a period of two hours, it became evident that the strain was proving too much for him. With that chivalry which marks public life in this country, even when the passions of partisanship are at their highest, Mr. Balfour suggested an adjournment for half an hour in order that the Chancellor should be given an opportunity to recuperate his energies. After this welcome respite, Lloyd George resumed his task, and continued his speech until eight o'clock. He had thus spoken for a period of four and a half hours. But it had a far higher claim to distinction than its length. Never

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had any previous Budget been introduced by a speech which covered so wide an area or touched so many vital issues. His Budget proved to be the most epochal, as it certainly was the most controversial, that the British Parliament had ever known. Little did his listeners realise on that day in April, as they saw Lloyd George draw from his red dispatch box sheaf after sheaf of typewritten notes, that the proposals which those notes embodied were destined to bring about a great constitutional crisis which would end in the elimination of that legislative veto which the House of Lords had exercised for centuries—and thus bring to pass what long years of organised agitation and protest had previously failed to achieve. Hitherto the annual Budget had found its main value as the annual balance sheet of the nation—a survey of profit and loss, with the estimation of the sources of any fresh increments of income which the exigencies of the country made imperative. To Lloyd George had fallen the feat of investing it with an unprecedented significance. He made it a vantage ground for the amelioration of the conditions of the poor, a leverage in the social economic welfare of the community, and a source of stimulating hope to the masses in their unceasing struggle against the ills and privations of their hard lot.

The complexity of the Budget, which was not inaptly described by Mr. Balfour as containing three or four Budgets rolled into one, together with the novelty of some of its proposals, served to restrain the note of criticism on the day of its presentation; but as its import began to assume its due proportions,

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the silence became broken,—on the one hand, with the jubilation of its supporters, who saw in it the prophecy of a sure and better era, and, on the other hand, with the execration of its opponents, who discerned in it the triumph of revolutionary legislation and the premonition of the country's doom.

The proposal which stirred the wrath of its opponents was that for taxing land. But its author hotly repudiated the charge that it involved a tax on industry. "We are," he insisted, "placing the burdens on the broadest shoulders. Why should I put burdens on the people? I am one of the children of the people. I was brought up amongst them, I know their trials, and God forbid I should add one grain of trouble to the anxieties which they bear with such patience and fortitude. When the Prime Minister did me the honour of inviting me to take charge of the National Exchequer at a time of great difficulty, I made up my mind that, in framing my Budget, no cupboard should be barer, no lot should be harder to bear. By that test," he exclaimed in ringing tones, "I challenge them to judge the Budget."

It may be justly said that never had any speech on the public platform created so tremendous a sensation as did the speech which Lloyd George subsequently delivered at Limehouse in the East end of London. His anticipations that, in exchanging the Board of Trade for the Treasury, he was bartering the tranquillity of the haven for the tempests of the open sea, proved to be well founded, for in place of universal popularity he found himself the object of the fiercest antipathy and of the most frenzied vituperation.

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The *Spectator* snarled at him as "Jack Cade *redivivus*, and a rather second-rate Jack Cade at that." In a special degree he became the butt of ducal bitterness. One Duke sneered at him as "the demagogue from Wales," while another was so carried away with fury that he declared that he would like "to see Lloyd George in the middle of twenty couple of hounds." Another member of the House of Lords promised his tenants that on the day which marked the deposition of Lloyd George from office he would, in token of his joy, roast a live ox in his park—an undertaking which drew from Lloyd George the scathing rejoinder that he would strongly advise the noble lord not to get too near the fire on that day lest he should be mistaken for the ox.

Notwithstanding all the scorn and obloquy to which he was thus subjected, Lloyd George pursued his purpose with unrelenting persistence. Opposition served only to quicken his zeal and to harden his determination.

XVI

THE BUDGET AND THE HOUSE OF
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CHAPTER XVI

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NEVER was any Parliamentary measure fought with more unresisting stubbornness than was the Bill which embodied the Budget proposals of 1909. It occupied the attention of the House of Commons through the long hot days of summer, and it was still under consideration when the chilly shadows of the short dark days of November set in. Lloyd George endured the strain with unabated zest. Day and night alike he would be found in his place on the Treasury Bench ready to meet every amendment with good temper and especially with an unfailing resourcefulness.

The measure, however, had to run the gauntlet of an unfriendly Upper Chamber. This was a menace that had never harassed any previous Budget, for ever since the days of Charles II, the theory that the power of the purse was vested in the Commons had been given the force of unbroken observance. Long usage had confirmed the Commons in the possession of an ancient right which had been recently exercised in regard to the Old Age Pensions Bill, for the changes which the Peers had seen fit to introduce into its provisions had been declared by the Speaker to be breaches of the privileges of the House of Commons,

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and the Lords had no alternative other than to submit to that decision. Lord Lansdowne had tacitly admitted the traditional power of the Commons over all money Bills in his advice to the House of Lords to reject the Licensing Bill rather than attempt to amend its proposals, on the ground that amendments to the Bill would be regarded as infringements of the financial privileges of the Commons.

It was assumed, therefore, that, notwithstanding the vehemence of their protests against the proposals of the Budget, the House of Lords would feel compelled, by sheer force of constitutional rule and usage, to give it passage into law. But the opposition was so fierce as to make the dominant party in the Upper House absolutely reckless of attitude. As a result there arose a demand for a drastic departure from precedent. Chief among those who urged such action was Lord Ridley, the chairman of the Tariff Reform League. The impression that the House of Lords could not touch finance he declared to be founded merely on a resolution passed by the House of Commons centuries ago. "We have hitherto acquiesced in the financial decisions of the House of Commons," he added, "because the Government has been conducted by sane men, but we now have a House of Commons controlled by a pack of madmen, and we must consequently take different measures."

Lloyd George found himself harassed also by timid counsels from the ranks of his own supporters. When he first submitted his financial proposals to the Cabinet, his land taxes immediately provoked dissent, and it was only under cover of a threat of resignation

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that he had succeeded in silencing the opposition of his colleagues. But as the agitation against the Budget continued to wax in its intensity, and its fate became uncertain, the expediency of discarding the land taxes was urged afresh.

In the course of a speech at Newcastle, Lloyd George informed his audience that the Government was going to send the Bill up to the Lords, "all the taxes or none." He frankly confessed that the action of the Lords was a matter which concerned them far more than it concerned the Government. "The more irresponsible and featherheaded amongst them want to throw it out," he continued, "but what will the rest do? It will depend," he added, with his aptitude for metaphor, "on the weather. There are some who are not fair-weather sailors, and they will go on. But poor Lord Lansdowne, with his creaking old ship and his mutinous crew—there he is, he has got to sail through the narrows with one eye on the weather-glass and the other on the forecastle." Then in words of grave import he warned the Lords of the consequences of their action. "They are forcing a revolution," he declared, "and they will get it. The Lords may decree a revolution, but the people will direct it. If they begin, issues will be raised that they little dream of. Questions will be asked which are now whispered in humble voices, and answers will be demanded then with authority. The question will be whether five hundred men, ordinary men chosen accidentally from among the unemployed, shall override the judgment of millions of people who are engaged in the industry which makes the wealth of

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the country. That is one question. Another will be, who ordained that a few should have the land of Britain as a perquisite? Who made ten thousand people owners of the soil, and the rest of us trespassers in the land of our birth? Who is it that is responsible for the scheme of things whereby one man is engaged through life in grinding labour to win a bare and precarious subsistence for himself, and when at the end of his days he claims at the hands of the community he served, a poor pension of eightpence a day, he can only get it through a revolution; and another man, who does not toil, receives every hour of the day, every hour of the night, whilst he slumbers, more than his neighbour receives in a whole year of toil? Where did the table of that law come from? Whose finger inscribed it? These are the questions," he continued in a voice ominous with significance, "that will be asked. The answers are charged with peril for the order of things the Peers represent; but they are fraught with rare and refreshing fruit for the parched lips of the multitude who have been treading the dusty road along which the people have marched through the dark ages which are now emerging into the light."

This speech had as immediate and frenzied an effect on his opponents as had the speech at Limehouse, while his reference to "the rare and refreshing fruit" was held up to ribald scorn and made the butt of numerous gibes.

By the middle of November the Budget had passed through the Commons, and consequently the Peers found themselves faced with the stern necessity of an immediate decision. It was known that there had been

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a cleavage in the counsels of the Conservative leaders in regard to their line of action. The more moderate of them had counselled action on the basis of due regard for the constitutional right of the Commons, but others of them had strongly advocated the bold but reckless course of immediate rejection, and this policy perceptibly gained the ascendancy. A number of factors contributed to this end. Lord Rosebery had made a speech in September in which he had in the strongest terms stigmatised the Budget as a revolution and as leading directly to Socialism. Even more emphatically dramatic was the memorable declaration by Lord Milner at Glasgow, when he urged that it was the duty of the Peers to reject a Budget which they believed to be bad, and "to damn the consequences." Moreover, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, who, though exiled from public life by illness, still continued to exert his great influence over the policy of his party, had expressed his hope that the Lords would destroy the Budget; and such an intimation represented for the bulk of the Peers the force and the sanction of an edict.

As a result it had become evident that the Peers were resolved on rejection, and all doubt in the public mind was set aside when, on the 17th of November, Lord Lansdowne gave formal notice that on the second reading of the Finance Bill he would move "That this House is not justified in giving its assent to the Bill until it has been submitted to the judgment of the country." Five days later the debate on the second reading took place, and Lord Lansdowne moved the rejection of the Bill. In referring to the threatened

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consequences of rejecting such a measure, he declared that he and his colleagues had fully considered such consequences and were quite prepared to face them. The threat of a financial deadlock, he added, with studied hauteur, did not dismay him, and, as to the threats directed against the House of Lords, he reminded his brother peers that such threats had long been flung at them. "Shall we stand better or shall we stand worse," he inquired, "when the struggle comes if we shirk our responsibility now?"

Lord Lansdowne's motion was carried by an overwhelming majority. There remained, therefore, for the Government no course other than to refer the issue forthwith to the decision of the country; but it is safe to say that there was not a landowner or a brewer in the land who viewed the rejection of the Bill with such jubilation as its chief sponsor. For Lloyd George it marked a consummation of circumstance such as he had long desired. Ever since he had held office he had come to realise that there was little hope for any substantial instalments of social reform as long as the House of Lords continued to exercise its arbitrary powers; hence the reason why he crowded into his Budget proposals that were calculated to rouse the wrath of the Peers, and supplemented his proposals with speeches on the public platform that were designedly challenging in their tone and severe in their strictures.

On the evening of the day on which the Finance Bill finally emerged from the House of Commons, Lloyd George entertained at a private dinner those of his colleagues who had been closely asso-

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ciated with him in piloting the Bill through its various stages. One toast only was submitted, "May the Lords reject the Budget!" It was honoured with alacrity in an intuitive realisation that the all-determining opportunity which Liberal statesmen had so long desired for a strategic triumph over their traditional foes was at last in the offing. A few days later the hope materialised. The Lords rejected the Budget, and the great struggle began.

In a speech, a few days after the rejection of the Budget, Lloyd George declared in a triumphant tone that, even if the Budget had been buried, it was in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection. Its slaughter had raised greater, graver and more fruitful issues. "We have to arrest the criminal," he declared, "and we have to see that he perpetrates no further crimes." The momentous event in the Lords had closed one chapter in the history of the country, but a new chapter was being written—a chapter with a better hope of realisation, for the sinister assembly which had been more responsible than any other power for wrecking popular hopes had perpetrated its last act of destructive fury. "Liberty," he exclaimed, "owes as much to the foolhardiness of its foes as it does to the sapience and wisdom of its friends." He pointed out that for generations Liberal statesmen had been striving to bring to an issue great forces. Their Bills had been mutilated, torn and devitalised by the machine of the Lords, but it had not been possible to bring the cause to any sort of decision. "It has been done at last, and I am proud that I have had a small share in it. At last the cause

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between the Peers and the people has been set down for trial in the great assize of the people, and the verdict will soon come."

In the most emphatic tones he declared that he would not remain a member of a Liberal Cabinet one hour, unless he knew that the Cabinet had determined not to hold office after the next General Election without full powers being accorded to it which would enable it to place on the Statute Book of the realm a measure ensuring that the House of Commons in future could carry not merely Tory Bills but Liberal and progressive measures in the course of a single Parliament, either with or without the sanction of the House of Lords.

The rejection of the Budget was followed by a resolution moved by Mr. Asquith in the House of Commons on December 2nd in which the action of the House of Lords was denounced as a "breach of the constitution, and usurpation of the rights of the Commons." Mr. Asquith supplemented his resolution with an intimation of an immediate dissolution, an intimation that evoked an outburst of applause from his followers in demonstration of their eagerness to accept the challenge of the Lords.

On the dissolution of Parliament, Lloyd George journeyed to Carnarvon, where he addressed a large and enthusiastic gathering of his constituents. After a full examination of the issues at stake, he declared that the race "has nothing to fear except from stagnation. The people may not secure all they seek, but, if they bear themselves manfully, they will achieve other ends they dare not even hope for now."

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Then, with a tremulousness in his voice, he suddenly embarked upon a peroration which in the charm of its simplicity and the tenderness of its pathos made an irresistible appeal to the emotion of an audience that was peculiarly susceptible to the sway of the orator. "Yesterday," he said, "I visited the old village where I was brought up. I wandered through the woods familiar to my boyhood. There I saw a child getting sticks for firewood, and I thought of the hours which I spent in the same pleasant and profitable occupation, for I also have been something of a backwoodsman; and here is one experience taught me then which is of use to me today. I learnt as a child it was little use going into the woods after a period of calm and fine weather, for I generally returned empty-handed. But after a great storm I always came back with an armful. We are in for rough weather," he continued, in application of the tender reminiscences of his boyhood; "we may be even in for a winter of storms which will rock the forest, break many a withered branch, and leave many a rotten tree torn up by the roots, but when the weather clears you may depend upon it there will be something brought within reach of the people that will give warmth and glow to their grey lives, something that will help to dispel the hunger, the despair, the oppression and the wrong which now chill so many of their hearths."

From Carnarvon he travelled back to London in pursuance of his crusade against the Lords. In an address at the Queen's Hall to a great demonstration of Nonconformists, he quoted the reference of *The Times* to the House of Lords as a jury. "If it is a

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jury," he retorted, "we challenge the panel. It is a biased jury. It is not a fair jury. It is not properly summoned; it is not properly constituted. Nonconformity has no free access to it. It has no champions there. It has no hearing there. Judgment goes against it by default. We have the right to demand justice from the highest tribunal in the land, and," he exclaimed, "we mean to get it, too."

At the outset of a speech which he subsequently made in Cornwall he took occasion to refer to a statement made by "somebody of the name of Lord Savile," that he had cheered in the House of Commons a British defeat during the Boer War. He had written to Lord Savile to know upon what authority he had made such a statement, and Lord Savile had written in reply withdrawing it and apologising for having made it. Lloyd George confessed that he would have been quite content to have the matter rest there, but Lord Savile had since written a letter to the Press in which he charged him with having done something just as bad, if not worse. "He said," proceeded Lloyd George, "that the Tories got up a mob in Birmingham to kill me, and I would not allow them to do so. Well, I am very sorry," he added with affected solemnity, "I behaved so badly, but judging from the way in which they are circulating the statement, you might have imagined that one of the most glorious incidents in that war was the getting up of a mob of fifty thousand persons to kill a man who had the effrontery to disagree with them, and that the most discreditable incident in the war was the fact that I outwitted the fifty thousand."

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Although he addressed meetings day after day—sometimes as many as four and five a day—his speeches displayed an unfailing resourcefulness in both substance and setting. He never repeated himself. On the contrary, every speech revealed some fresh aspect of argument and some new flashes of epigram. And his public utterances were as outstanding in their dynamic effect upon popular feeling as they were in the felicitousness of their phrasing. They were half-battles, and their effect was instantaneous.

While thus engaged in his strenuous campaign, he was being stoutly opposed in his own constituency. Conscious of his ability to hold the seat, Lloyd George had pursued his campaign in the country with undeviating steadfastness, only returning to his constituency on the eve of the poll. The ballot boxes gave him a majority of 1,078 in an aggregate vote of 5,288. In view of the fact that he was scarcely in the contest at all, his triumph was, as he confessed, much better than he had anticipated.

It was recognised on all hands that the result of the General Election re-establishing the Government in power was in a special degree due to Lloyd George's efforts, and especially to the fighting spirit which he had evoked in the breast of the masses. But while his friends acclaimed his triumphs, his opponents gave vent to their anger in scurrilous attacks. He was taken to task in the leading weekly reviews. The *Spectator* lashed him for his "oratorical excesses," while the *National Review* dubbed him "as a charlatan if ever there was one since Cleon, the first demagogue, ran up and down before the people and slapped his knee,

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but a charlatan," it added, "of emotional and rhetorical genius, for all his vulgarity, who played well on the emotions he had excited."

The plan, which the Cabinet decided upon, was to submit to the House of Commons, as soon as urgent financial business had been dealt with, a series of resolutions which should embody three specific purposes—namely, the exclusion of the House of Lords from the domain of finance; the predominance of the deliberate and considered will of the House of Commons within the lifetime of a single Parliament; and a modification in the constitution of the House of Lords with a view to making it an elective rather than an hereditary assembly. When these resolutions had passed the Commons, they would be submitted to the House of Lords as the basis of intended legislation, and on the attitude of the Lords would hinge future developments. By sending the resolutions to the House of Lords, as Lloyd George pointed out, the Government would be able to ascertain whether the Lords would be prepared to proceed with a measure drafted upon those lines. If they were not, he added, he could give an assurance that the Government did not propose to plough the sands, for they were resolved that, unless they found themselves in a position to ensure that their proposals could be passed into law, they would not continue in office. The matter of the veto, he pointed out, was a matter of the greatest moment for the British democracy, and perhaps of even greater moment for the people of Ireland, he added, with a significant glance at the Irish benches.

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The resolutions were submitted to the House of Commons on March 29th, and after they had been carried, they were embodied in the Parliament Bill which was then given its first reading. Having thus made clear its policy and its determination in regard to the main issue in the controversy, the Government submitted to the House the rejected Budget and secured a majority of 86 for its second reading.

In re-introducing the rejected Budget, the Chancellor's task on this occasion was comparatively easy. Notwithstanding the dislocation of the finances of the country, as the result of the action of the Lords, he was able to report national progress.

On the third reading, the debate was made notable by a speech from Mr. Asquith, in which he paid a striking tribute to his colleague the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to whose gift of courageous and skilful statesmanship the triumph of the Budget had been so conspicuously due. "We are going to-night," declared Mr. Asquith, "to take leave of the Budget so far as the House of Commons is concerned. If this were the last word that I ever uttered in this House, I should be glad to record my own unalloyed satisfaction for two things—in the first place, that it fell to my lot to lay the foundations, and to prepare the way, and to initiate the working of what is now a national and indestructible system of Old Age Pensions; and in the next place I have been permitted, through the genius, tact, patience, and courage of my right honourable friend," he added, as he turned in the direction of Lloyd George, "to be associated with him in his great financial scheme which, without

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trenching in any way on the principles or practice of the fiscal system which has made our country prosperous and commercially supreme, is going to provide an adequate, ample and expanding reservoir alike for our needs of national defence and of social reform."

In the Strangers' Gallery there sat, on that memorable occasion, Mr. Richard Lloyd of Criccieth. He had come up to witness the triumph of the fatherless lad whom he had brought up on the humble hearth of his own little home at Llanystumdwy, and it was noticeable that amid the tornado of applause which swept through the House of Commons, in ratification of Mr. Asquith's tribute to his achievement, Lloyd George instinctively glanced up at the aged figure in the gallery. Each caught the wistful glance of the other in an intuitive interpretation of emotions which were too deep for words. For each of them the occasion was an ever memorable one. It marked the consummation of plans and purposes which had been conceived in the remote past when the aged uncle had been making heavy sacrifices in the task of laying the foundation of a career for his foster-child.

On the 28th of April—exactly one year after its introduction into the House of Commons—the rejected Budget made its reappearance in the House of Lords; but the scene was vastly different from that which had greeted it on its previous appearance. The scarlet benches were no longer crowded and the atmosphere had lost its electricity. In place of the strident notes of angry criticism which had been so

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resonant on the first occasion, the speeches were couched in a subdued spirit of utter resignation to the inevitable. Lord Lansdowne, in accepting the verdict of the electorate, made a virtue of necessity. He still believed it to be the worst Budget ever devised, but as the country had sanctioned it, he admitted that there was no other course open to them, as Peers, than to let it pass. Its passage through the Lords was quickly followed by the final stage of the Royal assent. Conspicuous among the Members of Parliament who attended to witness the ancient ceremony which invested the Budget with the force of law, was Lloyd George. As he stood at the bar, surrounded by a number of his colleagues, he surveyed the scene with the light of triumph in his eyes. There were few Peers present, but he was the cynosure of their glances. One of the clerks of the House of Lords read out the title of the Bill, whereupon another of the clerks instantly added in the Norman French tongue which, in perpetuation of ancient custom, still continues as the official medium of the Royal Assent—"Le Roy le veult" ("The King wills it"). Lloyd George's countenance was wreathed with smiles as he walked back to the other House. He had scored a notable triumph. The rejected Budget had become the law of the land.

The Budget of 1909 carved for itself a distinct and even a dominant place in the annals of British finance. Quite apart from the constitutional crisis which its ultimate passage through Parliament involved, it marked the first attempt to formulate a really democratic Budget. Direct taxation assured a definite

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and even a substantial place in the nation's financial system, even in times of peace. Superfluous wealth was taxed by Parliament for the avowed purpose of improving the lot of the poor and for ensuring those social reforms, the clamant need of which had been recognised, in generation after generation, by statesmen of every political creed, but which had hitherto remained untouched because the courage of one Chancellor after another had proved unequal to the herculean task of finding the necessary money.

To Lloyd George there thus fell the distinction of establishing, as an integral part of every British Budget, the just principle that increased taxation must be adjusted to the back that is broad enough to bear the burden.

"I have the greatest admiration for that man," declared the famous scientist Dr. Russel Wallace, some time later, in the course of an interview in the *Daily Chronicle*, as he recalled the greatness of Lloyd George's triumph. "When I think of his achievement," he continued, "I am amazed. What a great thing it was, first of all, to conceive that Budget, then to carry the whole Cabinet with him, then to get the House of Commons at his back, and finally to triumph in the country against all the combined forces of wealth and social influence! One man's work! And a man with no traditions behind him, a man of simple parentage, a statesman made by deep thought, acute observation, and profound sympathy. Why don't his enemies see and acknowledge what a great thing he has done, certainly the greatest thing in modern politics? How pitiful and degrading it is

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to read in speeches of his opponents vulgar and contemptuous references to his birth, his profession, and his manners! Is this all that they can say of a man who has accomplished an immense revolution by the sheer force of unanswerable logic? Do they not perceive what a vast thing it is he has done? Cannot they detach themselves from their petty interests and transitory inconvenience, to see that he has opened a new door for England, that future generations will be stronger for his action, that the State will be safer, securer, and richer in every way for his achievement? How short-sighted they must be if they do not perceive the inevitable consequences of this Budget!"

XVII

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CHAPTER XVII

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THE triumph of the Budget was followed by the recognition that the main struggle between the political parties was yet to come, and each side began to manœuvre itself into a position that would be strategically sound.

At this juncture a calamity befell the nation in the death of King Edward; and in the shadow of so great a loss, political issues lost their urgency. It was felt that in a time of national bereavement the clash of controversy should be stilled, and that it was only fair to the young Sovereign who had ascended the throne that he should enter upon his reign without any of the harassing circumstances of domestic controversies. The Government, therefore, in the month of June, invited the Opposition leaders to confer with an equal number of the representatives of the Government with a view of effecting an amicable settlement of an issue that threatened to embitter still further the relationships between the two Houses. The invitation was accepted, and Mr. Asquith, Lord Crewe, Mr. Lloyd George, and Mr. Birrell were chosen as representatives of the Government, while Mr. Balfour, Lord Lansdowne, Lord Cawdor, and Mr. Austen Chamberlain represented the Opposition.

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Early in November, Mr. Asquith announced to the House of Commons the failure of the Conference to agree, and both sides immediately saw that the end of the truce had come and with it the resumption of open warfare. In fulfilment of their pledges, the Cabinet resolutely resumed the struggle at the point at which it had been suspended in the early summer. They drafted a memorandum to the King in which they clearly set out their position: "His Majesty's Ministers cannot take the responsibility of advising a dissolution unless they may understand that, in the event of the policy of the Government being approved by an adequate majority in the new House of Commons, His Majesty will be ready to exercise his constitutional powers, which may involve the prerogative of creating Peers, to secure that effect shall be given to the decision of the country. His Majesty's Ministers are fully alive to the importance of keeping the name of the King out of the sphere of party and electoral controversy. They take upon themselves, as is their duty, the entire and exclusive responsibility for the policy which they will place before the electorate. His Majesty will doubtless agree that it would be inadvisable in the interests of the State that any communication of the intention of the Crown should be made public unless and until the actual occasion should arise."

This Memorandum was conveyed to the King by Lord Crewe, and, in accordance with constitutional usage, the King gave heed to the advice of his responsible Ministers. On the strength of the assurance that was forthcoming, the Government decided to

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appeal to the country on the single issue of the veto of the Lords. The Liberal Party had consumed its strength for long years in vain attempts to get its measures through the House of Lords; and now at long last the veto of the Peers was being raised as a direct issue in an appeal to the electorate.

Lloyd George was in too vital an intimacy with the temper of the democracy to doubt the result of the struggle. "Does any man in his senses believe," he exclaimed in the course of a speech at the outset of the campaign, "that we would provoke another General Election unless we were certain that if we get a majority it will be the final one in this long drawn struggle between the Peers and the People?"

The series of resolutions which the Peers had tabled in adumbration of their scheme of Referendum, he satirised as "wonderful resolutions—a great scheme with no particulars." He urged the country not to touch "such vague, misty, obscure proposals." They were, he declared, just like the smile of a frosty morning. They looked bright, but there was no glow in them. He laid emphasis on the fact that the Liberal Government was not a junta of party leaders; it was the executive of the country. A Liberal House of Commons was not a party convention; its members were the chosen representatives of the people in the House that was to establish its laws. And if the Peers rejected their measures or mutilated them, they were not fighting the Liberal Party, they were making a mockery of free institutions. There was not a free country in the world, he added, that would look at the system that prevailed in this country, for every

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country had senators chosen either directly or indirectly by the people.

From the metropolis he hastened to Edinburgh, where his visit aroused such interest that the demand for tickets of admission was said to be beyond anything experienced even in Gladstone's memorable Midlothian campaigns. Although every seat had to be paid for, over 20,000 applications had been received. In the course of his speech, which coruscated with his customary brilliancy of phrase and of metaphor, he ruthlessly attacked the hereditary principle upon which the House of Lords had been reared. There were scores among the Peers, he declared, who required mental exertion. And yet they sat in judgment daily upon the chosen representatives of forty-five millions of people. They had no qualification at all for the power which they arrogated to themselves, and there was no defence for it except in snobbery. "To have to take the eldest son, whether he is able or not—that," he declared, "is a bad system for everybody. But it is now the apostolic succession of rank. Snobbery," he continued, "is a charlatan creed. It is a bad thing to found a constitution upon. It is an impossible one to found a democratic constitution upon. It helped to destroy Spain, for they would not trust their great enterprises to the men of ability and power among them, but chose some representative of a great house." Unless it were counteracted, he declared, it would destroy Britain as well. He drew a vivid contrast between the two Houses—the House of Commons with a membership drawn from all grades of the community, and the

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House of Lords, the brow of the majority of whose members had never been sprinkled with the curse of man. The eating of bread through the sweat of their brow, he added, was unknown to them. "They are born," he proceeded to say, "within that magic circle of cherubim with flaming swords—that Garden of Paradise where plenty is obtained without labour. They know nothing of the daily worries of a trader's existence, the care and the thought spent, the knowledge and the experience gathered, the skill acquired in the million ways of earning a living. That is no possession of theirs. The manna is strewn plenteously on their path through life, and others gather it for them from the cradle to the grave. All is found for them. As Mr. Chamberlain once said, 'they toil not, neither do they spin'—except," he added in a witty reference to Lord Rosebery, "those who indulge in the caprice of a lonely furrow, and even that furrow is never driven straight. And they do not sow," he proceeded in his indictment of the leisured lives of the Peers, "they do not reap, they do not mill the golden grain, they do not convert it into bread. They meet it first where it is daintily spread on their tables. I will only say this of them," he added as his voice softened into a pathos-laden note, "the brilliance of the sunshine of their lives blinds them to the squalor around them." He denied the qualifications of the Peers to legislate, on the ground that sympathy is essential to legislation, and sympathy without knowledge is impossible. "Civilisation," he exclaimed in another of his thrilling sentences, "has no perils for property. It is not property that stands in need of defence, but poverty."

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The result of the contest in the Carnarvon Boroughs was never for a moment in question, and there consequently was no surprise when Lloyd George was returned with a majority of 1,208. As he observed in acknowledging his return, the slender majority of eighteen votes, which he had obtained at his first contest twenty years before, had expanded into the dimensions of a four-figure majority. But the real measure of his achievement was reflected in the victorious return of the Government to power with an undiminished majority. The initial struggle had been won. The veto of the Lords had become smitten with doom. The Commons had finally triumphed. For that epochal result Lloyd George was primarily responsible. It was his resourcefulness that had precipitated a struggle which had so long eluded the test of a decision, and it was the skill of his intrepid leadership that had brought it to so triumphant an issue. His was the voice that had sounded the trumpet-call of the battle, and that had inflamed the democracy with the zest of the conflict. "In Mr. Lloyd George," wrote one eminent writer in tribute to his triumph, "democracy beholds something more than a champion of causes, something more than a leader of Liberalism; he is the Voice which has called it from a long sleep, and the Inspiration which is likely to impel it to heroic deeds. He is something which Conservatism lacks, which Imperialism caught for a brief moment from Mr. Chamberlain only to lose it in the intricate commercialism of Tariff Reform; he is the Poet, Prophet, and humanising genius of a proud democracy."

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After the heavy strain of his long and arduous campaigns, it was not surprising that his throat should show signs of relaxation, and so he left for the Riviera in quest of the rest that had become so imperative. While he was there, a report appeared in the columns of the French Socialist journal *L'Humanité* of what purported to be an interview which he had granted to M. Jean Longuet. In recording his impressions of the British statesman, the French journalist described him "as a pure Celt from top to toe," and declared that his speeches recalled "the revolutionary mysticism of Cromwell's soldiers."

"The British are a strange people," Lloyd George was reported to have remarked to his interviewer; "they are capable of the most daring legislative acts, and yet at other times they are afraid of the smallest reform. One day they will face a lion; the next they are afraid of a flea-bite." And in illustration of such observations, he contrasted the calmness with which they had accepted the daring experiment of granting self-government to the Boers in South Africa, and the clamour evoked by his taxes on land value.

After many weeks of hard and unceasing labour in its preparation, Lloyd George submitted to the House of Commons, early in the month of May, his great measure of social amelioration. It consisted of two separate parts, one of which dealt with sickness and the other with unemployment. The sickness branch of the Bill was divided into two sections, one of which was compulsory and the other voluntary. The compulsory part of the Bill involved a statutory de-

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duction from the wages of all the employed classes who earned weekly wages or whose earnings were under the Income Tax limit. A worker's sickness and invalidity weekly insurance was compounded as follows:—four pence from his wages; three pence from his employers; two pence from the State. As he brought his speech to a close, after he had dealt exhaustively with the proposals of the Bill, he appealed to the House of Commons to help the Government not merely to carry the Bill through, but to fashion it—to strengthen it where it was weak, and to improve it where it was faulty. “Here we are in the year of the crowning of the King,” he exclaimed in a peroration that visibly thrilled the House with the allurements of its vista. “Men from all parts of this great Empire are coming not merely to celebrate the present splendour of the Empire, but also to take counsel together as to the best means of promoting its future welfare. I think that now would be a very good opportunity for us in the homeland to carry through a measure that will relieve untold misery in myriads of homes—misery that is undeserved; that will help to prevent a good deal of wretchedness, and which will arm the nation to fight until it conquers ‘the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noonday.’” To his gratification his scheme was received both in Parliament and in the country with an approval begotten of an intuitive feeling that the measure represented the most far-reaching instalment of social reform within living memory. “We do not know which to admire the more,” declared one journal in the ecstasy of its tribute; “the vivid imagina-

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tion which has foreseen a way out of so many difficulties, or the patience and determination which have been in labour for so long to make straight that way."

Amid every manifestation of good will on both sides of the House, the Bill passed its first and second reading, unchallenged by a Division.

In one of his subsequent speeches, he told his audience that he had never claimed that his Bill offered a final solution or a complete remedy. It was, he declared, one of a series. After reminding them that he had been for some years in politics, and had had as large a share of contention and strife and warfare as any British politician, he proceeded to say in picturesque phrase: "This Session I have joined the Red Cross. I am in the ambulance corps. I am engaged to drive a wagon through the twistings and turnings and ruts of the Parliamentary road. There are men who tell me that I have overloaded that wagon. I have taken three years to pack it carefully. I cannot spare a single parcel, for the suffering is very great. Now there are some who say that I am in a great hurry. I am in rather a hurry, for I can hear the moanings of the wounded, and I want to carry relief to them in the alleys, the homes where they lie stricken, and I ask you, to help me to set aside hindrances, and to avoid the pitfalls that beset my difficult path."

In the month of June Lloyd George returned from the historic scene at Carnarvon, where the investiture of the Prince of Wales with the sceptre and symbols of his titular chieftainship of the Welsh people had taken place amid a grandeur of ceremony

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and of setting which was unique in the history of Wales, to the council board of Downing Street to find that the international horizon had become darkened with an ominous cloud. Morocco had developed into a centre of conflicting claims between France, Germany and Spain. France had already dispatched an expedition to Fez, while Spain had taken steps to occupy portions of the interior. So tempting an opportunity for a territorial scramble made a ready appeal to Germany with its eagerness for fresh acquisitions, and accordingly an intimation was made to Sir Edward Grey, through the German Ambassador in London, that, "the German Government regarded a return to the *status quo* in Morocco as doubtful, if not impossible; and that what they contemplated was a definite solution of the Moroccan question between Germany, France, and Spain." To that end a German cruiser had already been dispatched to the Port of Agadir on the Morocco coast. Such an intimation obviously left Great Britain entirely out of account in the contemplated rearrangement—an omission to which, in view of its treaty obligations to France, it could not possibly agree. On July 4th, Sir Edward Grey had informed the German Ambassador that the matter had been considered by the Cabinet, and that, in the face of the treaty obligations and of the commercial interests of Great Britain, they were not prepared to recognise any new arrangements in which they had not been consulted. For seventeen days nothing more was said on either side, but on July 21st, Sir Edward Grey sent for the German Ambassador in order to impress upon him afresh the determination

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of the British Government not to remain inactive if Germany persisted in her purpose of establishing herself at Agadir. It happened that, on the day on which Sir Edward Grey conveyed this intimation to the German Ambassador, Lloyd George was due to speak at the annual banquet of the bankers and merchants of London, and both Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey agreed that, if no references were made on such an occasion to foreign affairs, the omission might be misinterpreted by the German Government as a weakening of attitude on the part of the British Cabinet. Moreover, it was desirable, in view of the possible developments of so sinister a situation, to sound such a note of warning as would reverberate in Germany; and, as Lloyd George was regarded on the Continent as the last man in the British Cabinet who would be likely to agree to any outbreak of hostilities, both Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey felt that a warning from his lips would be vested with special force and gravity. It was therefore decided that Lloyd George should avail himself of so strategic an opportunity for sounding the note of warning. "For some weeks," Mr. Churchill has recorded in recalling the memories of that period of tenseness, when the situation was so perceptibly fraught with peril, "Lloyd George offered no indication of what his line would be, and in our numerous conversations he gave me the impression of being sometimes on the one side and sometimes on the other. But on the morning of July 21st, when I visited him before the Cabinet, I found a different man. His mind was made up. He saw quite clearly the course to take. He knew what

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to do and how and when to do it. The tenor of his statement to me was that we were drifting into war. He dwelt on the oppressive silence of Germany as far as we were concerned. He pointed out that Germany was acting as if England did not count in the matter in any way; that she had completely ignored our strong representation; that she was proceeding to put the most severe pressure on France; that a catastrophe might ensue; and that, if it was to be averted, we must speak with great decision and we must speak at once. He told me that he was to address the Bankers at their Annual Dinner that evening and that he intended to make it clear that if Germany meant war, she would find Britain against her."

At the outset of his speech at the Mansion House, Lloyd George referred with pride to the commanding place occupied by Great Britain in promoting the prosperity of other countries. "We are the bankers of the world," he continued; "we are the carriers of the world; we are the produce brokers of the world; we are the insurance office of the world. We have a paramount interest in the general prosperity of all countries. Anything that conduces to the world's prosperity is our interest; anything that impairs it is chiefly our loss." There was only one circumstance, he proceeded to say, that could possibly interfere with that stream of prosperity whose fertilising influence was spreading over the whole world, and that circumstance would be anything that disturbed international peace. He declared peace to be the first condition of continued prosperity, and he expressed his belief that there was no reason to fear that there

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was any imminence of a catastrophe that would endanger peace, although there were constant questions which produced discussions and sometimes irritation between governments. "But I am also bound to say this," he added as he proceeded to read from carefully prepared notes which, as afterwards transpired, had received the *imprimatur* of both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, "that I believe it is essential in the highest interests not merely of this country, but of the world, that Britain should at all hazards maintain her place and her prestige among the Great Powers. Her potency has been many times in the past, and may yet be in the future, invaluable to the cause of human liberties. It has more than once in the past redeemed Continental nations, who are sometimes too apt to forget the service, from overwhelming disaster, and even from national extinction. I would make great sacrifices to preserve peace. I conceive that nothing would justify a disturbance of international goodwill except questions of the greatest national moment, but if a situation were to be forced upon us in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of hazard and achievement, by allowing Britain to be treated, when her interests were vitally affected, as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of nations, then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure. National honour is no party question. The security of our great international trade is no party question. The peace of the world is much more

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likely to be secured if all nations realise fairly what the conditions of peace must be; and it is because I have the conviction that nations are beginning to understand each other better, to appreciate each other's point of view more thoroughly, and to discuss calmly and dispassionately their differences, that I feel sure that nothing will happen between now and next year which will render it difficult for the Chancellor of the Exchequer in this place to respond to the toast of the continued prosperity of the public purse."

The speech created a sensation on the Continent. Although he had studiously avoided any specific reference to Germany by name, the implication of his remarks was strikingly self-evident. The French newspapers openly hailed the speech as a warning to Germany which was all the more marked, as the *Temps* observed, because of Lloyd George's Liberalism, his pacific tendencies, and his regard for Germany. The Berlin newspapers were content to reproduce it without comment beyond inquiring in headlines: "For whom is the Minister's warning intended?" But the German Chancellerie was much too disturbed by the stern character of such observations to affect ignorance of their purpose. A feeling of amazement was succeeded by one of rage, and there was current in Paris a report that the German Ambassador in London had been instructed to demand a retraction from the British Government and even the dismissal of Lloyd George from office, after the fashion of M. Delcasse in France, whose deposition had been found necessary for placating the ruffled feelings of the German Government.

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It is very evident that the report had a very substantial strain of fact, for, four days after the speech, Lloyd George, who was taking a stroll with Mr. Churchill, was summoned by a special messenger to go at once to see Sir Edward Grey. "Mr. Lloyd George stopped abruptly," according to Mr. Churchill's narrative, "and turning to me said, 'That's my speech. The Germans may demand my resignation as they did Delcasse's.' We returned as fast as we could and found Sir Edward Grey in his room at the House of Commons. His first words were 'I have just received a communication from the German Ambassador so stiff that the fleet might be attacked at any moment. I have sent for McKenna to warn him.' He then told us briefly of the conversation he had just had with Count Metternich. The Ambassador had said that after the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, no explanation could be made by Germany. He had then read a long complaint about Mr. Lloyd George's speech which, to say the least, could have been interpreted as a warning to Germany's address and which, as a matter of fact, had been interpreted by the Presses of Great Britain and France as a warning bordering menace.' Sir Edward Grey had thought it right to reply that the tone of the communication which had just been read to him rendered it inconsistent with the dignity of His Majesty's Government to give explanations with regard to the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer."

So dignified and unbending an attitude attained its purpose, with the result that the German Government wisely refrained from pressing the matter fur-

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ther and the threatening peril of a rupture between the two countries passed away. Years later, as he recalled the memories of the crisis in their just perspective, Lloyd George claimed—and justly so—that, so far from precipitating the peril of a war with Germany, the stark boldness of his utterance had obviously served to scare the German Government out of its blustering haughtiness.

After such conspicuous service to his country, in the domain of foreign politics, Lloyd George was called upon to deal with a grave peril that had suddenly arisen at home. For some time there had been a fresh recrudescence of discontent and friction among the railway workers. The conciliation boards, which Lloyd George had established as the basis of settlement seven years earlier, had not fulfilled the men's expectations. This was said to be due to a two-fold cause: the conciliation system had not been worked fairly by some of the companies; and, secondly, there were certain drawbacks in it which were fatal to its success. Under stress of the irritation thus caused, the men proclaimed in August, at twenty-four hour's notice, a general strike. Mr. Sydney Buxton had by this time succeeded to the Presidency of the Board of Trade, and consequently the task of essaying a speedy settlement in the interests of all parties fell to his lot. In his difficulties he invoked the help of the Prime Minister, who in firm tones informed a deputation of the railway men that in fulfillment of its duty to the community the Government could do no other than keep the railways open at all costs, but with a view of redressing their grievances he offered them a Royal

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Commission, whose duty it would be to take evidence and prepare a report. Unfortunately his statement was interpreted as a threat, and his offer of a Commission was regarded as a means of staving off their demands, with the result that the prospect of a settlement became more remote. At the critical moment, the services of Lloyd George as a conciliator were requisitioned. With consummate tact he assuaged the ruffled susceptibilities of the men, and he succeeded in persuading them to agree to refer their grievances to a special commission of five members who were required to report without delay in regard to such administrative and legislative action as was deemed necessary for removing the causes of complaint. As one leading journal justly declared, from the moment that Lloyd George took control of the negotiations, they assumed a favourable turn. His matchless gifts as a diplomatist were seen to the fullest advantage, while the successful result of his efforts re-established his title to the proud name of peace-maker. "Very glad to hear," the King telegraphed to him in expression of his congratulations, "that it was largely due to your energy and skill that a settlement with regard to this very serious strike has been brought about. I heartily congratulate you, and feel the whole country will be most grateful to you for averting a most disastrous calamity."

For months the Government had been battling with difficulties both at home and abroad. The perils of complications with Germany had been aggravated by the threat of a railway strike at a time when the Parliament Bill was being submitted to the House of

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Lords, and when the protracted struggle between the two Houses was being brought to a definite issue; but in all its difficulties the Government had learnt to turn to Lloyd George. His resourcefulness never failed, and his indomitable spirit never wearied. But all the time his own difficulties had been growing. In his speech at Birmingham he had referred to the chorus of commendation with which his Insurance Bill had been received, and in picturesque phrase he had described the Bill as being "smothered with praise." But the most striking tribute to the merits of the Bill emanated from *Vorwärts*, the organ of the German Labour Party. After a close scrutiny of the provisions of the measure that journal declared its superiority to the German scheme to be incontestable. "By uniting invalidity insurance with sickness insurance, of which it is really a part," it declared, "the Chancellor of the Exchequer has created a self-contained law which protects the workman from the earliest illness until old age, from the worst misfortunes of proletarian existence." The triumph of the British measure, from the German point of view, lay in the fact that it could be carried into law without the adoption of the hampering bureaucratic methods which marred the German scheme. "Mr. Lloyd George alone," declared *Vorwärts*, in the fervour of its tribute, "is worth a dozen so-called German statesmen," while President Taft of the United States of America, in quick recognition of the humanitarian purposes of the measure, had enthusiastically declared that Lloyd George had translated the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew into practical legislation.

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In view of such high and general commendation of the aims and purposes of his scheme, it was not surprising that Lloyd George should have openly proclaimed his confident anticipation that the Bill would find its way to the Statute Book within a period of three months. But the summer had not advanced far before a perceptible change in its prospects set in.

Commendation began to give way to criticism, and the merits of the Bill became lost in a cloud of misrepresentation. At by-elections it was made the object of savage attacks on Conservative platforms, and the prejudices of the various classes who were especially affected by its provisions were stirred up. The traditional antipathies of the British people to anything that savours of the element of compulsion were sedulously exploited in opposition to the Bill. The measure was scornfully caricatured as a laborious device for "licking stamps," and was declared to have no higher motive than the creation of an army of bureaucrats for its administration. Domestic servants, who stood to gain by the financial benefits of the scheme, were encouraged by their mistresses to write in protest against its proposals as unjust incidencies on their wages. The apt phrase "ninepence for fourpence" which Lloyd George had used in illustration of the pecuniary benefits which would accrue to the workers under the provisions of the scheme, was assailed with savage vituperation. But the most formidable obstacle which the author of the Bill had to encounter was the stubborn and organised opposition of the medical profession, who were openly threatening to

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refuse to carry out the provisions of the Act unless more favourable terms were conceded to them.

The Bill could no longer be described as "choked with honey"; and in the dramatic change in its prospects, its author found it necessary to seek a fresh metaphor. In a speech which he delivered in the month of November, he described the Bill as "swimming through a murky flood of misrepresentation." In view of the clamour which was being raised throughout the land in opposition to the measure, there were not a few among the supporters of the Government who were ready to urge that it would be expedient to defer its passage into law until the following session, in the hope that in the meantime the clamour would die down, and the purport of the Act be then better understood. But Lloyd George resolutely declined to give heed to all such timid counsels. "I will fight it through or I will fall," he declared, with the same unyielding spirit as had enabled him to triumph over the timidity of his colleagues in the Cabinet in regard to his land taxes. He insisted on having the Bill through by the following year, on the ground that once the benefits began to flow in, the misrepresentations would inevitably cease. "Why should the Bill be made to wait," he cried. Were they to wait until the dark stream of human misery had flowed past, or until it surged up and broke over the banks of law and convention, and devastated the land with its torrent? "I am taunted," he proceeded to say, "that I have promised a new heaven and a new earth. They seem to think that that phrase was uttered by me. I con-

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fess that I am a humble believer in it, and I should like to be able in a humble way to help its advent: a new earth where the health of the multitude will be more precious in the eyes of the law than the wealth of the few; a new earth where the superabundance with which Providence blesses labour shall be directed and controlled so that the home of the labourer shall be saved from wretchedness, penury, poverty and privation; a new earth where the best of all shall be concentrated and organised to avert the worst from each."

He supplemented his speeches on public platforms with strenuous devotion to the furtherance of his Bill. "The energy and diplomacy of Mr. Lloyd George," declared *The Times* at the close of the year 1911, "have never been so well displayed as in his initiation and conduct of the Insurance Bill, which he pressed through with little help from his colleagues." But it added that, as the result of the unprecedented magnitude and complexity of the measure, its passage found him "at a critical moment in his hitherto marvellously successful career." The difficulties of the situation failed to daunt or to discourage him. Day after day he received deputations representing classes or interests affected by the Bill, and it was justly estimated that he received more deputations in the course of a few weeks than any other Minister of the Crown had received in the course of a lifetime. By dint of his innate persuasiveness, he conciliated hostile interests, soothed susceptibilities that had become ruffled, and made smoother the passage of the Bill. As he confessed on one occasion, he had been

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compelled to fling some things out of his wagon to vested interests—"a delicacy here, a bit of luxury there, and even an opiate in order to get along." As the result of the sullen attitude of the doctors, he found it advisable to make them a concession of an additional two shillings per member on the amount stipulated in the Bill. But every concession was made with the supreme object of facilitating the passage of the Bill into law, and of ensuring its prime purpose in the advancement of the physical welfare of the great mass of the workers. "The Chancellor of the Exchequer," declared one of the spokesmen of the Front Opposition Bench in a generous tribute, "is master of the art of conciliation, and no one could pilot a difficult Bill through the House with more success."

In spite of the vehemence with which it was attacked by its opponents, and of the timidity of some of its supporters, the Bill in due time passed through all its stages and became the law of the land.

On one occasion Lloyd George described himself as a man who was "in a hurry to relieve the needy." The description was as just as it was apt. He had marked the growing discrepancy between the programme of the political parties and the glaring economic needs of the masses, and with characteristic eagerness he had applied himself to the task of bridging that chasm. The proposals of his memorable Budget, the Old Age Pensions Act, and the Insurance Act represented separate arcs in the bridge. The completion of one had marked the beginning of another. But although he had thus succeeded in making legislation relevant to the vital needs of the masses who dwelt

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in the shadow of care and precariousness, he realised that the bridge would remain incomplete as long as the system of land tenure was left untouched. Consequently in his speech at the annual meeting of the National Liberal Federation at Bath in November, 1911, after emphasising the supreme value of the Insurance Bill as a contribution to the cause of social reform, he advocated a drastic revision of land tenure as one of the most urgent needs of the country. The feudal system, of which it was a relic, might, he declared, have been very useful in the dark ages, but it had become absolutely unsuited to the needs of the community. It was just like clothing a member of the Territorial Army in a coat of armour: it would impede his movements and weigh him down. The existing land system, he insisted, had hindered every attempt at social amelioration and thwarted every enterprise, whether industrial or municipal, and no progress could be achieved until the system had been recast. The most urgent of all needs, he declared, was that of the regeneration of rural Britain, but that, he added, could not be secured without a complete reform of the land laws. He drew attention to the ominous fact that hundreds of thousands of robust citizens were being constantly driven by the system of land tenure from the healthy environment of the soil to the allurements of towns and cities. "I am not surprised," he added; "for when the just rewards of labour are given to those who labour not, and when those who do toil are requited with wretched wages and still more wretched houses, you will not get the labour on the land."

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Impressed with the urgency of the land problem as the basic foundation of social reform, he applied himself to its advocacy with that measure of zeal which he had devoted to his memorable campaign against the House of Lords. He made it the theme of his speeches in various parts of the country, and he invested it with the force of a dominant issue.

However, the best laid plans of even the most resourceful of statesmen frequently "gang agley" by the operation of forces which be beyond their control, as Lloyd George was soon to discover by bitter experience; for, while he was straining every nerve in the pursuit of his land policy, the black clouds of war were slowly gathering on the horizon of Europe; and, ere he had time to mark their ominousness, the storm broke and the whole world reverberated with the shock.

XVIII
ARMAMENTS

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ARMAMENTS

THERE was no item in his annual Budgets which Lloyd George deplored so much as that represented by the expenditure on armaments. As he declared on one occasion, he regarded armaments as a burden on the industrial energy of the country and as a limit to the activities of the State in making provision for the social needs of the community. An enormous amount of wealth, he added, which would be available for much better purposes, was being drained by those epileptic fits of militarism which seized civilisation from time to time. But much as he bemoaned these "epileptic fits," begotten, as he believed them to be, of imaginary perils, he took no risks, as his Budgets clearly showed. Ample provision was made for maintaining that inviolability of the country from the peril of an attack which he recognised as supremely essential to the security and welfare of the nation.

The perceptible change in the atmosphere of the European Chancelleries encouraged him in the hope that a more cordial relationship could be established between Germany and Britain. The acute tension over the Agadir incident, which had carried with it the dread possibilities of war, had been succeeded in

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the two following years by the active co-operation of the two countries in the task of circumscribing the Balkan War, and in adjusting the results with a view to permanent settlement.

Lloyd George welcomed this favourable change in the relationship of the two countries as the omen of a new era. "This is the most favourable moment," he declared in an interview which appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* on New Year's Day, 1914, "that has presented itself within the last twenty years to overhaul our expenditure in armaments." He based this optimistic survey of the international position on the ground that the relations between England and Germany were "infinitely more friendly" than they had been for years. Both countries, he pointed out, had realised what ought to have been obvious long before, "and that is," he added, "that they have nothing to gain and everything to lose by a quarrel, and that they have everything to gain and nothing to lose by reverting to the old policy of friendliness." He referred to the growth of expenditure on armaments as "organised insanity," and he rejoiced to find signs that the industrial classes in European countries were increasingly protesting against it.

The Budget which he submitted to the House of Commons early in May in the same year—1914—reflected the buoyancy of his hope that, in the relaxation of the strain between England and Germany, the pressure for armaments had been considerably lessened, for it was essentially a domestic Budget. It dealt with the readjustment of the relations of local and Imperial finance.

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After he had set out at length his proposals for a graduated Income Tax, he warned the House of Commons that though he had had to find an extra million pounds on that occasion by way of taxation, there would be a still greater gap the following year. Part of the gap, he hastened to declare, he hoped to bridge by a reduction in the Navy Estimates on the ground that the period of arrears and of abnormal ship-building would have passed. There were one or two others, he added in a cheerful tone, upon which he confidently based his anticipation of a substantial reduction—in blissful unconsciousness of the grim fatefulness which the year held in store.

